George Chambers Bobbie Ann Mason F. D. Reeve

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

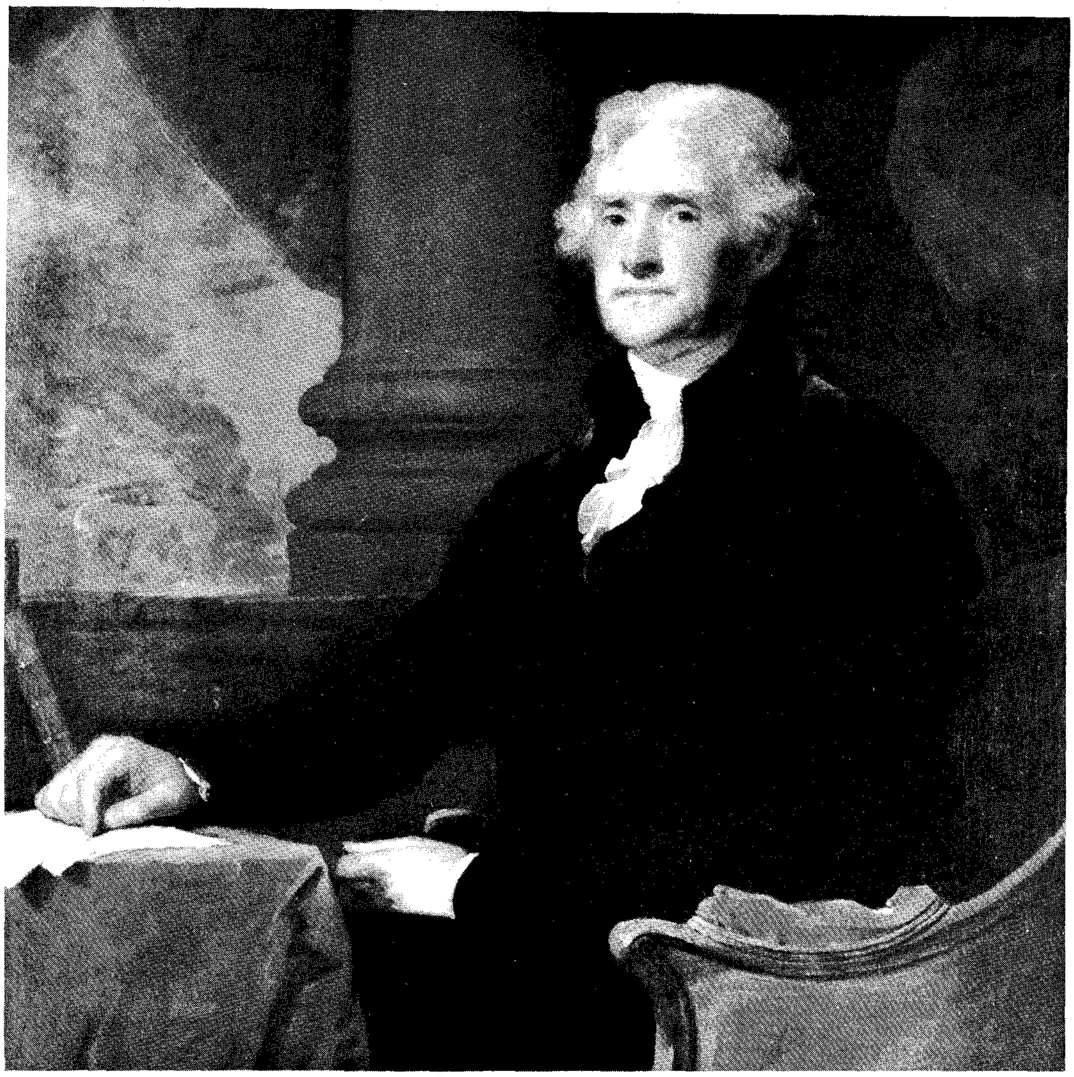
$2.00

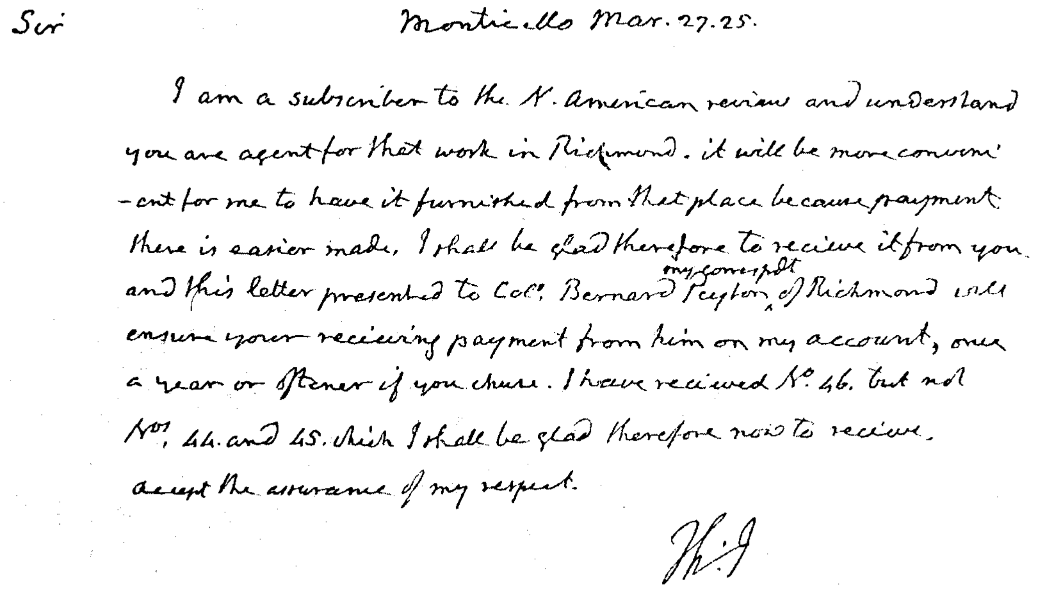
September 1981

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

09

73361 64817





Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. American review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more conveni-ent for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to recieve it from you. and this letter presented to Col. Bernard Peyton my correspdt of Richmond will ensure your recieving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have recieved No. 46. but not Nos. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to recieve. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th: J

Since 1815, no magazine in America has had a readership more distinguished or a literary history more rich than THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Now available at newsstands, as well as by subscription.

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

An Important Note:

Effective with the December 1981 issue of the NAR, the newsstand price of this magazine will rise to two dollars and fifty cents a copy, and the price of an annual subscription (four issues) will rise to nine dollars.*

To our present subscribers:

We will honor your renewal (for up to three years) at the old, eight-dollar-a-year rate until January 1, 1982.

To new subscribers:

We will honor your new subscription (for one or two years *only*) at the old, eight-dollar-a-year rate until December 1, 1981.

---

*$10 in Canada & Latin America;
$11 elsewhere

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

We note that the Reagan administration's habit of dispassion is beginning to affect not only the size of the defense and welfare budgets, the future of the labor movement, and the general prospect of survival, but the state of mind of the NAR's contributing editors. Kenneth Lash in this issue moves beyond personality into deeper (darker) considerations of morality, and Lawrence Sturhahn senses the colorations of conservatism as he commences a varied column on film/literature/acting. While we may share the gloom somewhat (a cartoon in the London *Times* comes to mind: husband and wife watching on television the news of American development of the neutron bomb, husband saying, "We need a bomb that only kills the people who drop it."), we offer antidote. Take the following, in any order you wish:

Yet another episode in the saga of the almost, not quite, approximately somewhat-less-than 4-minute short story, by a variety of hands, most of them new to these pages.

A long overdue appearance of "unclassifieds," fragments and inspirations qualified to defy usual categories.

Some small violences of inhumanity and official dunderheadedness, reported first-hand by Mark Lee and Carl Cahill.

The regular wealth of short stories (slightly more time consuming, these) and a surprising number of poems. Has the NAR gone soft on verse? Perhaps.

Feel better?

A note at the end: "The Man Whom Women Adored," a story by Joyce Carol Oates which appeared in the March 1981 number of the NAR, has been selected for inclusion in the 1982 edition of the O. Henry Prize Stories, to be published by Doubleday.

★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

REVIEW

Founded in 1815 Volume 266, Number 3 September 1981

EDITOR
Robley Wilson, Jr.

POETRY
Peter Cooley

ENVIRONMENT
Joseph W. Meeker

DESIGN
Roy Behrens
James Buckels

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Margaret Atwood
Leo J. Hertzel
Kenneth Lash
Barry Lopez
Stephen Minot
Mary Peterson
Lawrence Sturhahn

BUSINESS MANAGER
Charlotte L. Wilson

EDITORIAL &
BUSINESS OFFICES:

University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

RATES:

$2.00 a copy; $8.00 a year in the U.S. and its possessions, $8.50 in Canada and Latin America; all others $9.50 a year.

Cover: photograph by Robert Muffoletto

Illustrations & Photographs: Chris Wandrey (12), Anthony Stoeveken (18), Thomas Uttech (26, 48), Amy Marein (29-40), Tim Pietrzak (41), Edward Pearce (51), Elise Freda, Kate Henderson, Donna Evans, Lawrence Sturhahn (73-76).

FEATURE

29 The Four-Minute Short Story (Again)
  30 Nadine at 35—A Synopsis, *by Jo Sapp*
  31 Pink, Blue and Gold, *by Patrick Foy*
  32 The Man Who Had Maps, *By Barry Lopez*
  34 Sable's Mother, *by Pat Therese Francis*
  36 Hop on Pop, *by David Carkeet*
  38 Sea Change, *by Judith Carlson*
  40 A Little Death in the Venice of the Orient, *by Alice Jurow*

OTHER FICTION

12 Given Names, *by Sue Miller*
18 Uncle Tim's Masquerade, *by F.D. Reeve*
26 Heating with Wood, *by Joni Tickel*
41 Old Things, *by Bobbie Ann Mason*
48 Notes from the Bloodwell, *by Thaisa Frank*
51 March 11, *by George Chambers*

POETRY

11 The Butcher, *by Jeanne Murray Walker*
17 In the Bell Museum of Natural History, *by Barton Sutter*
47 All Hallow's Eve, *by Roger Mitchell*
50 Trees, *by Peter Wild*
56 Jeane Dixon's America, *by Gerald Costanzo*
59 Room by Moonlight, *by Barbara Moore*
63 Family Album, *by Don Bogen*
Limited Access, *by Irene McKinney*
75 Boccaccio's Garden, *by James Frazee*

DEPARTMENTS

4 American Eye: CALIFORNIA DOG FIGHT, *by Mark Lee;* VIRGINIA WATER FIGHT, *by Carl Cahill*
8 Cuttings: WORRYING AWAY AT MORALITY, *by Kenneth Lash*
21 Unclassifieds: *Paul Genega, Michael Covino, Bruce Rubenstein, Ted Kooser, Mili Ve McNiece, Christine Z. Somervill, John Calderazzo*
57 Familiar Matters: CLOUD CROSSINGS, *by Scott Sanders*
60 NAR Heritage: WEALTH, *by Andrew Carnegie*
65 Books and Authors: ENTROPY, *by A. Theodore Kachel;* PENMAEN PRESS: "DEO GRATIAS", *by Mary Peterson*
73 Film: MONTAGE, *by Lawrence Sturhahn*

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW [ISSN 0029-2397], September 1981, Vol. 266, No. 3. Published quarterly, in March, June, September, December by the University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614. Annual subscription rates: $8.00 in the United States and its possessions, $8.50 in Canada and Latin America, $9.50 in all other countries. Second class postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614. Copyright © 1981 by the University of Northern Iowa. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the permission of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage affixed. Fiction manuscripts will be read *only* between October 1 and March 31 each year. Claims for subscriber copies not received must be made within six months of date of publication. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to *The North American Review*, University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614. THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, the Humanities Index, Index to Little Magazines, Index of American Periodical Verse, the Book Review Index, and others. Member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM) and the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP). Article reprints and back file volumes in microform are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 or 18 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EJ. United States and Canadian newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

California Dog Fight

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when we finished the tortillas and beans. As the women began to clear the table, Hector swallowed the rest of his coffee and led me out to the porch.

"There will be blood," he said in Spanish. "The dogs get cut."

"I know that."

"You know, but *do* you know?" he asked and smiled. Hector was a squat, middle-aged Mexican who had first come to Santa Barbara as an illegal farmworker. Now he had his own gardening business, a house, and a large family. He was an *hombrón:* a man respected by other men.

"Do you know what to look for in a dog? Will you know how to bet?"

"I'm not going to bet."

"No?" He seemed confused.

"I just want to see a dog fight. I want to see what it looks like."

Hector shrugged and stared at his boots. His fifteen-year-old son, Mario, came around the house and waited for his father's instructions. "All right," Hector said. "Let's put Brujo in the truck." Mario nodded and the three of us walked back to get the dog.

A *brujo* was a male witch in Mexico and the name seemed to fit the muscular black animal. It was a Pit Bull: a dog bred for fighting. Although it only weighed about forty pounds, it had the stocky legs and heavy shoulders of a Bull Mastiff. Its head was large and shaped like a blunt triangle: the broad skull tapering to a thick black muzzle.

"He's strong today," said Hector. "As strong as me." He knelt down to snap the dog off its chain and Brujo's stubby black tail thumped on the dirt. "When he fights, I fight. Do you understand?"

"Yes." I helped them set a camper shell on the back of Hector's pickup. Mario got in with the dog and we started to drive east over the Santa Ynez mountains.

It began to get hot as soon as we left the coast. I rolled down the truck window and the wind roared in smelling like sage and wild mustard. As he drove, Hector explained that we were going to a small "convention" of only three fights and one practice fight. The bigger conventions were held down in Los Angeles and in the Imperial Valley.

"How many people come?"

"Hundreds."

"How much money is bet?"

"Thousands. Many thousands."

Fifteen miles out of Ojai, Hector turned down a dirt road and drove through a lemon orchard to some scrubland fenced in with rusty barbed wire. After swerving around a few dozen potholes, we passed an Anglo boy sitting in a pickup truck with a CB radio. Hector slowed down and showed his face. The boy spoke into the radio and a few minutes later we were pulling into a farmyard full of trucks and campers. The farm itself wasn't much to look at: a barn, a small farmhouse, and a few sheds too weary to fall down. I smelled meat cooking and saw a crowd of people standing around a barbecue pit set beyond the house.

"Well!" said a fat white man walking towards us. He wore a blue leisure suit and a belt with a huge brass buckle. "Glad you could make it! Glad you're here!"

The fat man shook Hector's hand and promptly asked me for twenty-five dollars "to help pay for the facilities." I gave him the money as a half dozen other men drifted over to the truck. One of them, named Vernon, a young man with shoulder length hair, owned the dog Brujo would fight. He watched intently as the fat man hung a portable livestock scale on the tailgate and weighed Brujo. Hector told me later that he had been obliged to put up four hundred dollars of the twelve hundred he bet against Vernon. He would have lost the money if Brujo hadn't weighed between forty-one and forty-three pounds.

Brujo made weight and hundred dollar bills began to change hands. Vernon talked briefly with Hector, then walked back across the barnyard. "You want to see everything?" Hector asked. "Go with my son."

"Why? What's he going to do?"

"Wash the dog."

"Brujo?"

Hector laughed. "No, Vernon's dog. You'll see."

Still confused, I watched Mario get a squeeze bottle of liquid soap out of the truck cab, then followed him over to Vernon's camper. As we walked, Mario explained that you had to wash your opponent's dog to make sure that its skin wasn't covered with poison or tranquilizers. "If his dog has bad skin. . .your dog dies," he said. We stopped near a walk-in camper and Vernon came out with his dog.

Vernon had the long hair and overalls of a country hippy, but his face reminded me of a pioneer who had gotten lost on the plains. He called his dog Big Boy even though he was only a half pound heavier than Hector's dog. Big Boy was brindle colored—his white skin covered with brown and black patches—and he had a badly healed scar still oozing over his left eye. Like Hector, Vernon had controlled his dog's consumption of liquids for the last twenty-four hours so that his stomach was shrunken and you could count his ribs. As Mario knelt down and started washing Big Boy with a garden hose, Vernon kept slapping the dog's muzzle away from the water.

"Hector told me you're from Hollywood," he said. "I've done some things . . . seen some things . . . they'd make a pretty good movie."

I kept silent and he started telling me about his adventures, most of which occurred when he was a hired guard for a large hacienda in Colombia. For three years, he had been allowed to break into peasant huts, own two women, and kill anybody who looked like a bandit.

"I bet you could make a lotta money off this, but I'm givin' it to you free. Know why?"

"Not exactly."

"I got my dogs. I got a job. I don't need money."

"Then why. . ."

"I just wanna have people knowin' about me. . . . What I've done." He gave me a hungry look. "That's all I want. Swear to God."

"Let's go!" We all looked across the farmyard and saw the fat man walking towards the barn. "We're gonna match you and Hector first. . . Get this thing off to a good start."

* * *

Quickly, Mario dried Big Boy with an old beach towel, then sucked some skin on the dog's back to be completely sure that no poison was there. As the crowd started to come up from the barbecue area, Vernon picked up an athletic bag full of medical supplies and proudly led Big Boy into the barn. The barn was a large, well-lighted building that had once held dairy cows; all the stalls had been torn down and only the cattle smell remained. At one end, someone had nailed a carpet onto the dirt floor, then had fenced it in with a three foot plywood barrier. That was the pit: that was where the dogs would fight.

The crowd was about half Mexican and half Anglo. Most of the Mexicans were young men dressed in jeans and western shirts, but a few of them escorted women wearing summer dresses and high-heeled shoes that sank in the dirt. There were a few blacks in city clothes, about two dozen Anglo farmers squeezing beer cans, and several older men wearing expensive cowboy boots. Being inside the room made everyone talk louder and the noise increased when Vernon and Hector set the dogs in opposite corners. Both men knelt in front of their animals, making sure they couldn't see their opponent. The fat man took off his jacket and stepped into the pit.

"Everybody ready?" Both men nodded. "Face your dogs!"

Looking tense, Vernon turned his dog around. Hector imitated him and held onto Brujo's neck when the dog saw Big Boy.

"Turn 'em loose!"

Neither dog barked or growled. The crowd was silent as they raced across the pit, slammed together with a dull thud, and locked jaws. Brujo lost his footing and both dogs fell onto the carpet. Big Boy bit Brujo's leg, flipped him on his back, then went for the throat. Everyone yelled as he started chewing the soft folds of skin under Brujo's muzzle. He loosened his jaws to bit Brujo's windpipe, but the black dog rolled away from him and attacked again.

The crowd pressed closer to the pit. They shouted encouragement and increased their bets. Both animals started to bleed from cuts on the neck and muzzle. I could hear their nails scratching on the carpet and their wet growls as they bit into each other. After about twenty minutes, Big Boy locked his teeth on Brujo's left shoulder and held on. Hector lay down on the carpet and shouted at Brujo as the black dog jerked back and forth. Brujo looked hurt. He was hurt. When he broke away, he ran across the pit.

"Turn! Turn! Get your dogs!" the fat man shouted. Both owners caught their dogs and dragged them back to their corners. They pulled towels out of their equipment bags and started to wipe the dogs off. Feeling dazed and sick to my stomach, I walked around the barn trying to control my emotions. When I came back, several bettors were leaning over the barrier, but Hector refused to answer their questions.

"You ready?" the fat man asked. Both men nodded and turned their dogs around. "Black dog's gotta make scratch. He's gotta show that he wants to fight."

Vernon held onto his dog while the crowd waited to see if Brujo would be brave enough to fight. Brujo hesitated for a second, then started to run across the pit. Vernon let go of Big Boy and the two dogs met head on. There was a cracking sound and Vernon slapped his hand on the rug. When the dogs broke apart, a tooth fell out of Big Boy's mouth.

As the match went on, both dogs started to tire. Slippery with blood and spit, they fought for a good hold, then tried to wear the other dog down. On long holds, the crowd got bored and several men drifted away to buy beer. When either animal started to tear at a lip or an ear, the atmosphere changed in seconds and people pushed against the barrier.

After about forty minutes, Brujo bit into his opponent's back leg and chewed through to the bone. Big Boy was limping when he broke free and he shied away when Brujo charged him. The fat man separated the dogs, but Big Boy wouldn't make scratch. Brujo showed that he still wanted to fight and the fat man pronounced him the winner to a chorus of whistles and boos.

It was over. The crowd looked a little embarrassed, as if they had just taken the same roller coaster ride and had heard each other scream. I felt tired and angry, at the crowd for their "sport," at myself for being there.

"Damn dog," said Vernon. He had just lost twelve hundred dollars, but his stunned face implied an even deeper disaster. He picked up Big Boy and held him over the barrier, but nobody wanted to take the bloody animal. Angry, he started to curse at everyone so I went over and

SKIP NOV. 19th.

On November 19, we'd like you to stop smoking cigarettes for 24 hours. It's worth a try. Because if you can skip cigarettes for a day, you might discover you can skip 'em forever.

THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

American Cancer Society

This space contributed by the publisher.

Still available
(at no increase in price):

the NAR t-shirt

The NAR logo silk-screened in white on a navy blue, polyester & cotton shirt in sizes S, M, L, and XL.

$6 (postage included)

Orders to:

The North American Review
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614

(Allow 3-5 weeks for delivery)

helped him out. “Thanks,” he said. He vaulted over the barrier and I handed him the dog. I picked up his medical bag and we walked outside to the camper as they started to bring in two new dogs.

* * *

It was getting dark outside. The red sun began to cut into the horizon. Vernon set Big Boy on the dirt and I started to walk away. “Hold him, will you?” he said. “I’ve got to get the right medicine.” I knelt down and held Big Boy’s head while Vernon climbed into the camper. Big Boy whimpered and rolled in the dirt. He breathed rapidly, his torn leg jabbing the air.

I looked up. Vernon came out of the camper carrying an ice pick. He squatted down by the dog. I was too surprised to say anything. “Gotta hit the right spot,” he said. He pressed the tip against Big Boy’s heaving chest, then leaned forward and pushed it in.

The dog shuddered and died. I stood up, not quite believing what I had just seen. “Damn dog,” Vernon said one final time. He threw the ice pick into the camper.

Vernon said something to me, but I turned away and walked back to Hector’s truck. The crowd shouted in the barn and I realized that another match had started. For a moment, I felt like the whole world was based on death and the desire to kill. It had always been that way. It would never change. I reached the pickup. I saw Brujo’s limp body on the truck bed and my new-found philosophy melted away. The deepest, truest, part of me wanted the dog to be alive. He had to be alive.

“Brujo’s all right. I gave him some medicine to sleep,” said Hector. He watched as I sat on the tailgate and touched the dog’s stomach with my hand. It was warm. I could feel each breath.

“He’s a brave dog,” I said.

Hector was very pleased. “Yes. A brave dog.” *–Mark Lee*

Virginia Water Fight

(In the fall of 1978 the NAR published an essay by Carl Cahill in which he detailed his fight to prevent the city of Chesapeake, Virginia, from forcing him to tap in to the asbestos pipe of the city’s water system. Three years later, we bring you up to date.–*Ed.*)

It seems I should be able to raise $3,000 to continue my efforts to avoid drinking water contaminated with asbestos fibers. That’s about what it’ll cost to print the voluminous record of Carl Cahill vs. City of Chesapeake for an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The printing expense (Xerox copies aren’t accepted by the highest court; transcripts, briefs, citations must be set in type, printed offset and bound) won’t leave any money for fees for an attorney. My lawyer has stuck with me since 1975 through countless General District Court appearances, three Circuit Court trials and three trips to the Virginia Supreme Court. I hope he’ll go all the way with me.

Oh, I’ve solicited help from associations whose members stand to benefit if I win. But the Cast Iron Pipe Association wants to wait and see how my case turns out. And the National Health Federation responded enthusiastically with words, nothing else.

There was “very little” the National Water Well Association could do for me “except to offer you encouragement.” And the Franklin Electric Company of Bluffton, Indiana, makers of pumps, wrote “we do plan to help . . . through news releases. When the releases are published, we will send clippings of the articles.” No releases were published if, indeed, they were sent out.

The Virginia Water Well Association didn’t even reply (but just this year the Florida Water Well Association asked *me* for help in overturning an ordinance which outlaws private wells.)

And I got some unsolicited offers, like the one from Bob Vernon of Arlington, Virginia, an unemployed lawyer who volunteered the services of some colleagues who specialize in constitutional law.

I sent him a history of the case, plus some pleadings from the record, and got no response.

A spokesman for one of Ralph Nader’s public interest groups also offered the assistance of its battery of lawyers. “They’ll be in touch with you soon,” said Richard Pollock from the group’s Washington, D.C. office. That was six months ago and I’m still waiting.

In 1978, after NBC News did a national telecast about my fight over asbestos-cement pipes, I got lots of encouragement from all over the country—and $10 from a kid in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Thus far, it’s been a lonely battle dating back to 1969 when the City Council in my hometown of Chesapeake, Virginia adopted a mandatory water connection ordinance which not only requires everyone to hook up their homes to 200 miles of asbestos-cement city water mains but prohibits the use of water from private wells for domestic purposes. Thus, anyone who uses well water to quench his thirst, wash his clothes or take a bath is guilty of a Class I misdemeanor (the most serious of Virginia’s lesser crimes) and can be fined $1,000 and sent to jail for a year.

I started contesting the ordinance in court in 1975 and wrote about the lengthy litigation in the March 19, 1977 issue of *The Nation*. The editor headed the article “Tyranny in a Glass of Water.”

Since the article appeared, Chesapeake—due mostly to my efforts—in 1978 became the first city in the nation to ban for health reasons any further use of asbestos-cement pipe (but, unaccountably, still requires connection to the asbestos-cement pipe still in the ground.)

Because of publicity over the Chesapeake pipe ban other communities have outlawed asbestos-cement pipe. Among them are Simsbury and Farmington, both in Connecticut; Seattle, Washington; Hanover County, Virginia; Menlo Park, California. Connecticut last year became the first state to prohibit installation of the pipes and the

Massachusetts General Assembly is considering a similar law.

Meantime, a lobbying organization, the Asbestos-Cement Pipe Producers Association (which is funded principally by Johns-Manville Corp.) prepared a dossier on me. Joe Jackson is president of the association. His job is to deny to legislative bodies that asbestos fibers eroding from the pipe walls and entering potable water supplies are a threat to health. He once tried to discredit me before a Virginia Senate subcommittee by saying the only reason I object to asbestos-cement pipes is because I want to avoid paying Chesapeake's "tap on" fee.

Jackson and his employers are the only ones who will say the pipes are safe. Everyone else urges caution. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scientists Leland McCabe and Jim Millette authored a paper in 1980 in which they state: "There is now some direct human evidence of a relationship between asbestos in drinking water and increased risk. There is now abundant evidence that ingested asbestos fibers penetrate the digestive tract. . . . There is now a general attitude in a number of countries that the only effective way of preventing asbestos-related disease is to drastically restrict the use of the material."

But the news that more and more communities are boycotting the pipes (sales dropped last year for the first time and Johns-Manville reportedly has closed four of its pipe plants) is little consolation to me.

The City of Chesapeake continues to chase me through court after court, trying to force me to drink city water with asbestos fibers in it. And I'm still resisting, although with dwindling resources.

Scarcely able to sustain the battle, I am now in the laughable position of receiving each week two or three calls and letters from individuals and citizens' associations whose members fear the pipes are dangerous and want me to help them stop their utilities departments and authorities from installing them.

Just recently, I've heard from people in Edgartown, Massachusetts; Toms River and Brick Town, both in New Jersey; Bradford, Pennsylvania; Olympia, Washington; Winnipeg, Manitoba; San Antonio and Santa Barbara.

I've made some new friends nationwide. And I've learned that courage is extremely rare in our society. (Almost every recalcitrant homeowner, when threatened with legal action, loses his bluster and rushes to hook up to the pipes.)

Still, I'm not discouraged, thanks to Herman Sacks, an elderly Norfolk, Virginia lawyer, veteran of thousands of court fights. Each time I pass him on the street he inquires about the progress of my case and when I tell him the going is slow he replies:

"But they know you're there. They know you're there."

–Carl Cahill

International Best Seller!

THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY

A REVIEW OF STRATEGIC
AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

From the celebrated Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University in Washington.

An informative, stimulating, and eminently readable discussion of the strategic, economic, and political issues facing today's leading policy-makers.

THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY is written with the insight and knowledge that only the most authoritative figures in international affairs could provide—Alexander Haig, Henry Kissinger, Leslie Gelb, James Schlesinger, and Walter Laqueur to name a few of our most recent contributors. Experts and insiders analyze emerging international issues before they reach the headlines.

You'll see THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY in the key Committee rooms on Capitol Hill, in Chancelleries on Embassy Row, and in prestigious offices and boardrooms all over the world.

For $16 a year you can have it on your own desk.

THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY

	Individuals	Institutions	
One year	☐ $16	☐ $20	Enclosed $______
Two years	☐ $30	☐ $38	Please bill me ☐
Three years	☐ $42	☐ $54	New ☐ Renewal ☐

For 1st class domestic USA, add $3.00 per year. For delivery outside the USA, add $3.00 per year for surface postage or $11.00 per year for airmail postage.

Name ____________________

Address ____________________ Apt. # ______

City ________________ State ______ Zip ______

Mail to: THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY (Box X)
Center for Strategic and International Studies
1800 K St., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20006

Worrying Away at Morality

Ronald Reagan is not a nice guy. He's an affable guy. There's a difference. Affable guys don't finish last.

Aside from the obvious malice of some of his appointments, Ronald Reagan appears to have a religious devotion to power. He believes in it. Direct, naked power that is exactly what it seems to be. He attracts movements that share in the belief; he appeals individually to that urge in us all to be powerful, to have our way. He presides at a time when private behavior has come out of the closet, freely exhibiting its aggressiveness, loudly proclaiming a clear conscience about it all. Public behavior is now free to follow. There is no further use for hypocrisy, no tolerance for it. Hypocrisy is for liberals.

Question: Are you now, or were you ever, a hypocrite?

* * *

Jimmy Carter, a tough man in his way, seemed constantly on the verge of apologizing for his power. Which is not in itself any reason to consider him a nice guy either, but he seemed to want to be, and that makes a substantive difference. Moral aims affect our conduct, even when we fall short of them. Perhaps especially then, when the intention is all we have left to reassure us of our essential decency, still there to be tapped.

The capacity for civility and compassion is the hopeful part of the human being. We honor it (and ourselves) with the word "humane." Moral behavior, regardless of regional particulars, is seen as part of our human makeup, as flowing down to us all from the beginnings of creation. Along with its eternal opposite.

The terms of this struggle between "good" and "bad" are explained in every set of beliefs known to us . . . and fleshed out in guides for winning the struggle. In societies these guides are translated into moral codes. In proportion to the consensual grip of a society, these codes govern public behavior. Privately, moral belief has seemed less to govern than to describe our hopes for our behavior. How we'd *like* to be.

When we fall short we tend to punish ourselves privately, cover up publicly. Pretend. This pretense often takes the form we call hypocrisy.

When the practice of hypocrisy begins to fade away, what does it mean?

* * *

The essence of hypocrisy is talk divorced from action. The split occurs because moral behavior so often seems to require saying no to ourselves when it comes down to action. That may make it the most difficult of all human business. And the most complex, because we are told that through this continual act of saying no to ourselves we end up saying yes to life. How many people are capable of grasping the way that works without a religious referent?

How in a society where the individual is preëminent can we expect the consistent use of the necessary No?

And is there a great difference when we have such a referent? The threat of an afterlife in hell did not keep Christians from committing the Holocaust and Hiroshima. The ashes gave clear evidence that we had advanced beyond the reach of that belief. We were now on our own.

The first proclamation of the new moral regime was, "It ain't my fault." The guilt for what we had done, or perhaps for what we had become, was unbearable. The logical solution was to change roles—from the calculating wielder of power to the innocent, helpless victim. A whole school of victimology has sprung up. Social, political, psychological.

In the land of the victim, no one is responsible. It's fate, it's powerlessness, it's "other." Who is to preserve such a land?

Mythically, the hero. The redeemer. The bringer of the new solution. . . .

* * *

The theory of moral evolution should not be taught in schools. There is no evidence for it. It does not seem to have been programmed in. Physical evolution, yes. Intellectual evolution, yes indeed. In the form of science the intellect has in fact begun to create an evolutionary revolution. It threatens to engulf even the moral province in its sweep. The new possibility may be called Psychobiology.

The brain, in its mindless wanderings, has arrived at the DNA station. It is beginning to understand human "traits" as electrical and biochemical markings. It is even now reaching a tentative hand in there to stir up those markings, to rearrange them by gene splitting.

Is it fanciful to speculate that the human being may be on the verge of changing his own makeup? Not by airy voyages of the soul but by "mere" chemistry? That he may strain out of himself those tendencies toward viciousness and madness, and then perhaps go on to excise cynicism and bad table manners?

That could be the next great stage in evolution. Perhaps most remarkable, it wouldn't matter whether or not you were permitted to teach it in school. Is that why the creationists want to hobble science? Do they look into the future and foresee Splicers 24, Fundamentalists 3?

* * *

From the smallest to the largest, all our actions, all our thoughts, have consequences. They end up in the human stew. The concept is easy to

---

Note: "He" has been used throughout this essay to include both man and woman, and to recognize the historical fact that moral codes have until recently been largely promulgated by men. For better or worse.

comprehend if we think of humanity as having an organic structure comparable to that of the individuals who make it up. Psychology maintains that our every experience makes a mark, a mark that lasts. Our actions are non-biodegradable.

This is being written a few days after Israel's bombing of Iraq's nuclear plant. Almost without exception the world's governments condemned (publicly) the action. Prime Minister Begin, an unsympathetic man in many ways, looking like a small mongrel with teeth worn uneven from biting, defended the action at first with logic, then, pushed to the wall, he told the deeper truth: There won't be another Holocaust, he said. Never again, never again.

We'd better listen to that. The next 900 people at Masada may bring down half the world along with them if they opt for suicide. An option more emotionally reasonable than their acceptance of a second genocide.

In the United States, where a presumed religious revival is going on, there is a group who would deny that the Holocaust in fact took place. They're related to those who would deny ancient history, carbon dating; whatever is not to their taste they try to spit out. But history can't be spit out. If it existed, it exists.

The Holocaust is undying. Now it crops up, through Israel, as a force in the Arab world, forty years later and still fresh. Bigger now than it ever was. Now it is a vision for the whole world. It has become substance.

* * *

T.S. Eliot has Prufrock say he is no Hamlet. Fair enough. But he's learned the role, and will play it on his level. Shall I wear my trousers rolled? and so forth. Large concepts inform our merest acts. It is "tragedy" to lose a job or a tooth. A "champion" is a football team. A street gang has a Secretary of War. If we are not, we certainly do, ape. It's no wonder that at some time we strongly suspect that life is a game, our neighborhood a zoo.

On the other hand, a few of us do get to play with the gods. Some who did in our time took ultimate fire. This time they didn't have to steal it. They figured out how to *create* it. Thus far have we come.

And no farther?

* * *

Only saints and artists can comfortably digest failure. They turn it into the silk for their web. Many of them take no credit for the ability. They have an interesting story to tell, pretty much the same story. It goes like this: I don't do it. Something works through me. At those times of total intensity "I" am not there. An instrument is there, not even a musical instrument, more like a slide projector. The image flashes through me.

At the best moments of their lives, artists have no ego at all. Which may be why at other moments they're prone to all the ego high-jinks of a child.

I recall a story Linus Pauling told, about the eve of one of his to-be-Nobel-prized discoveries in chemistry. It came, as these revelations often do, at an off-moment. It not only caught him unaware but alone in his house, his wife away with relatives. The time was early evening, he was "puttering about." Suddenly there it was in his head. The solution. Clear, perfect, with no need for proof. He had it! After what he described as a reflexive whoop, he found himself running toward the telephone. He had to tell somebody. He had to tell everybody. "It's only natural," he said, non-apologetically. But as his hand touched the receiver, a thought came to him: I am the only one who knows this, I am the only person in the world who knows this. At which point he took his hand away from the telephone, he said, walked over to his favorite chair, and sat there all night. For a whole night he was the only one in the world who knew that answer.

When he told us the story he shook his head back and forth in amazement, giggling like a child.

* * *

Truths, like clothing, have their fashions. Most of us wear what's in style. Formerly the styles changed slowly, filtered down gradually. Now it is not so much fast as instantaneous. Thanks to the electronic picture we can all see what's new at almost the same time, almost at the moment of its creation. As a result the show, the resemblance, the *style* takes on a life of its own, an independent importance. It begins to dominate. We all wear what's new, regardless of how it looks on us. Re-do our old kitchen with Mondrian linoleum. Instant sophistication, a step back from reality, like instant coffee.

A result shows in the way we have come to talk to each other. Cliché is in. It so governs communication, with all of us relentlessly speaking the same currently received truths, that it kills conversation by removing the motive. On any level of contemporary American society, what passes for conversation is most often a routine succession of observations we have never observed, already known to the other person, who has been waiting to say the same things and can only participate by interrupting to carry on the recital. It's a new form of conversation: combative monotony. No wonder people run to the television. It is perhaps a wonder that they so little recognize the real enemy when it's right in front of them.

Received truths used to serve less for imitation than emulation. Emulation is directly involved with becoming. Imitation is more complex. It is an essential mode of learning, especially in childhood. But it can also, childlike, be a mode of hiding one's real thoughts and feelings . . . or of avoiding having any of your own. You get along by holding onto someone's hand.

It feels now as if this whole country is reaching out to hold on to someone's hand.

* * *

The brain may conceptualize why it is better to be moral than amoral . . . or vice-versa. It may serve to translate moral emotion to reason. In itself it is neutral. The brain is capable of operating on a level so abstract, of being so much an instrument, that in creating the computer it got its first inkling of what it looks like itself.

Reason requires a certain consistency. Emotion does not. It jumps all over the place. It swings, it calls consistency monotony, eludes predictability, and what it knows of rest it knows only by hearsay. It's this busyness of our emotions that makes us morally inconsistent. What we swore not to do yesterday, we have gone and done today. What we *know* is against our best interests, we have gone and done anyway.

Moral behavior is easy for the mind. It's unendingly difficult for the emotions. It may in fact be physiologically difficult. A "pain in the ass."

The message of our emotions in later years is that life on earth is a bitch. A sense of an eternal series of losing battles, punctuated by a few parties. The mind expresses it for us in story, where all of life is condensed into one large action that finally fails, "loses," often despite human efforts so great it makes you cry. In ordinary life we keep losing little battles, bouncing back to win a few, then losing more . . . and so on until we begin to speak of being "tired." We are preparing to lose the big one, to death.

It appears to be memory, not the spending of effort, that makes us tired. On the contrary, effort—*trying*—is a life-giving force. It derives from hope. If you want to predict intensity of effort, try to assess the measure of hope. It is hope that is affected by memory. It is here that the sense of loss plays so large a part.

The decline of profound belief in the supernatural has an effect both on our sense of loss and on the business of trying. The former is clear enough: it leaves us alone in the world. As for trying, that's a clean-cut affair on the moral level when it takes place within the boundaries of clearly stated "law." You do or do not measure up to concepts of the Koran, Confucius, the Bible, taboo. What happens when such a body of law is removed? A sense of liberation, for one thing. Open season on experience. Which is measured, "valued," in the here and now, by man. The measuring-rod for man becomes man himself. The Great Loser as the measure of all things? To proclaim that is to institutionalize Loss. By perceiving moral law as open-ended we build obsolescence into it, that hint of the cheap that engenders disrespect.

With no law outside himself, with no principle of forgiveness beyond his own limited capabilities, there is no end to man's possibilities for failure, no limits to his sense of loss.

Current revivalism expresses a wish to turn back. There is little likelihood that we can. Turning forward, there on the horizon, standing so large that its shadow touches our feet, is The Bomb.

What are we doing here talking of morality?

* * *

We love to talk of the human potential. It makes us feel better. It gives us a sense of command. As in Letters to the Editor, consistently moral messages uttered in the tone of a Marine sergeant to wrong-footed recruits. Even the letters of the editors to us, their editorials, are sermonesque, preternaturally wise. There is something irresistible here. The cynic, with his intelligent despair, might suggest that moral talk is simply another of man's ploys to dominate, to force others toward his own image. That has certainly been the case often enough in history.

Then there's moral talk translated into the contemporary semantics and approach of psychology. Here, talk of you and me substitutes for previous forms of moral speculation:

You are moral by fate, luck of the draw. The parents you had, the childhood, the love. You got decency with your mother's milk, you got civility in your highchair. In their Will, your parents left you self-esteem.

Mine left me self-pity, left me a lovelorn outsider, left me furious. And then left me a moral code to live up to. Might as well have left me an Alp to climb, in sneakers.

My world begins and ends with me. In between, I am somehow supposed to concern myself with you.

I will do so only if I'm made to.

Or if you're good to me.

Here again we meet that universal moral energizer: the possibility of kindness.

The battered human heart. Show it a kindness and it never forgets. It may never repay, but it never forgets. It has seen a vision.

That vision makes it weep, melts it. Have you never wept at the moment of goodness, whether or not you were receiving or offering it? Who "gets" it doesn't matter. It reaches down beyond that.

It reaches down beyond heroics. It reaches down to simplicity. The simple touch of one human being by another. Beauty.

* * *

If life is any one thing more than another, it is a process wherein the logical freely exists within the inexplicable. It is full of arbitrary transformations: variety dissolves to capriciousness, novelty to boredom, goal to mirage . . . and back again. The river is before us then behind us. One of the most telling images of created life comes not from poetry but from mathematics—the theory of combination and permutation. Given a certain set of numbers, the possible combinations and rearrangements are immense. We all share in the "given," but after that? Permutations, combinations. Some programmed, others random. There seems no final accounting for the random except as a life principle. Perhaps *the* life principle. A difficulty of fiction is to "capture" that randomness and set it out as pattern, as "of a piece."

Music, the mathematical art, operates more directly. It less describes pattern than *is* pattern. The various details of other arts here become variations on a theme. Permutations of "the given." Leading, traditionally, back to the tonic, "home," a resolution. Harmony. The essential harmony, that is independent of any special mode of harmonics. That may be stately or wild, written or improvised (foreseen or unforeseen), happy or sad, but resolution. As it may exist in life. We are enabled to *feel* harmony through music, even to feel logic. Could we do so if there were not already in us a harmonic sense, a structure of strings that can vibrate "sympathetically"?

The players play the music, the music plays us. The universal art, it is called.

* * *

Harmony would seem to be a universal principle, even in its absence, perhaps particularly in its absence, when we so yearn for it. Is it also a universal measure? Is it the ultimate moral determinant?

Surely it feels that way to us. Our quest in life is for peace, resolution, a living in harmony with others and with our world. Moral behavior itself seems connected to a natural form of harmony. Even nature's redness of tooth and claw is absorbed into it.

It is possible that there is no moral truth but harmony. No idea, no concept, no vision, no faith, no science that contains ultimate beneficence within itself. Only as it is arranged and played does it prove beneficent or otherwise, "moral" or "immoral."

—Kenneth Lash

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

JEANNE MURRAY WALKER

THE BUTCHER

On Tuesday afternoon a butcher wipes his nose and saws
a calf's hind quarter, fresh in from Iowa.
Like God, he knows the destination of each part.
He trims the fat for suet, whistling through his teeth,

thinking about a certain girl's red nails. He stacks
chuck steaks for Safeway, then loops his apron on its peg
and steps outside to smoke. Bending to tie his
rawhide bootlace he hears tires squeal a block away

and sees a woman from a doorway run to catch
a girl who wears a blue barette, who's struck,
who lies, her ear and fingers curled against the street
as though it were an uncle who would whisper

his last, precious clue to hide and seek.
The butcher watches cops collect like flies
then tucks his shirt into his pants
and pulls his door shut. He wanders a side street,

thinking of the picture by the peg,
pastel with age, curled by the summer heat,
the photograph a farmer sent from Iowa.
A hundred cattle low inside a fence.

He dreams of cradling one curly head,
to feed it nests of fresh grass and starflowers
which find their way to the most lovely places,
to long veins and complicated neckbones,

to the liver, bluish, slippery as wine.
Stepping into the picture, he leans against the fence
and moans. Above, clouds lower, gray as steel knives.
Hollow of eyesockets fill with blood.

He can't imagine any gods forgive like these.
Beside him goldenrods wave like children's hands.
All afternoon the butcher stands inside the picture
rocking one particular body in the mud.

SUE MILLER

GIVEN NAMES

My aunt's last words were characteristic. My uncle, her brother, to whom she had spoken them, repeated them compulsively to everyone who would listen at the memorial service a week later. My aunt had drowned. She had been drunk, which was not unusual for her, and she and my uncle were rowing home together in the dark from a family picnic. She objected to the way he rowed. "My God, Orrie, look at you, batting at the water in that half-assed way," she had said. "Jesus, put a little life into it. I could *swim* home faster than this."

Orrie said she sat still for a minute after this, and the only sound was of the oars slipping in and out of the black water. Then she stood up, kicked off her shoes, and dove in.

The boat rocked violently after she sprang off. My uncle thinks he might have jerked his hand off the oar to pull back from her splash, or maybe just the rocking bounced the oar out of the oarlock and his hand. It slid off into the water at any rate, and he spent several minutes retrieving it. My aunt floated on her back near the boat briefly, and he said he spoke sharply to her, told her she was "a damn fool or some such thing." She laughed at him and blew an arc of water up into the moonlight, "a great jet" he called it, then rolled over and swam off. By the time he got the oar back into the oarlock, he could barely hear her in the distance. He tried to row in her direction. He said he would row for a few strokes, pulling hard for speed, then coast and listen for her. By the third or fourth interval he knew he'd lost her. All he could hear was the gentle rush of water against the bow of the coasting boat. He rowed around in wide circles in the moonlight for a while, and then he had to row home and tell his parents. She was forty-two. They found her two days later.

The rowboat wasn't used until three days after that when my grandparents headed into town to retrieve her ashes. As my grandfather carefully handed my grandmother in, she spotted Babe's Papagallo shoes in the stern of the boat where she'd kicked them off before her dive. At this my grandmother, who'd taken it all "like a brick, a real brick" in my uncle's words, became hysterical. She began to scream rhythmically, steady bursts of sound. When my grandfather tried to loosen her hands from the edge of the boat, she hit him several times. She broke his glasses. Dr. Burns had to be summoned from his cottage across the lake to administer a sedative. "My baby, my baby," she whimpered, until she fell into her chemical sleep.

My aunt was my mother's youngest sister, my grandparents' youngest child. She had been an afterthought of one sort or another; everyone always had known it. But no one had ever dared to ask, and so no one knew, whether she was a mistake, or one last yearning look back at a stage in their lives already well past for my grandparents. My mother was twenty-two years older than her sister. She told me once that she had at first thought her mother was joking when she said she was going to have another child; and then was ashamed and embarassed by it. She said it ruined her senior year of college.

They were full of nicknames in my mother's family. The brother who rowed home alone in the moonlight had been christened Frank Junior. But because of a prematurely lugubrious nature, he was called Eeyore as a boy, short for Junior. That eventually became Or, which grew back again into Orrie.

My aunt's name was Edith, but she was "the baby" while she grew up, and this shortened easily to Babe. My mother was Bunny, and the two middle sisters were Rain and Weezie, for Lorraine and Louise.

They were a handsome, high-strung group, dominated by my grandfather, who was at once expansive and authoritarian. His parents had been immigrants. As a young man he had patented a wear-resisting heel for shoes, then sold the patent to B. F. Goodrich, and learned to make money from money. Each of the daughters had, in turn, married a man of great business promise, but somehow each one got stuck as a middle-level executive, none so gloriously successful as my grandfather.

My grandmother seemed overwhelmed in their company. In the few remaining pictures of her alone, without the family, she is a radiant debutante, a smiling, confident bride. But in even my earliest memories she is mostly just a silent presence; a cool hand on my forehead through a feverish night, or someone to make intercession with Grandfather over a minor infraction of the rules; but of herself, inexpressive.

I was the oldest grandchild, five years younger than my Aunt Babe. I spent every childhood summer with her on the lake where my grandparents had their summer home, and where she died. In her isolation Babe befriended me. Reciprocally, I adored her. I had no siblings. I was dominated completely by my mother, and Babe seemed the ideal older sister, glamorous, strong, and defiant.

My grandparents' summer home was really what used to be called a camp, of several buildings on the far shore of an inland lake in Maine. The road ended on the near side, so the first people to open camp in the summer had to bushwhack their way around the lake, open the shed and lower the leaky rowboats into the water; then return for the boxes and trunks and whining, dusty children. Subsequent arrivals would park and honk their horns, one long, three short. There was always some eager cousin waiting to row across and fetch them.

My grandparents' summer home had no electricity, no running water, no telephone. We used only canoes or rowboats for transportation. There was an unspoken contempt for those weekend families across the lake, whose clusters of electric lights twinkled merrily at us after dark while we huddled around kerosene lamps; who polluted the lake with motorboats, and had names on their cabins like Bide-a-Wee, or Cee-The-Vue. In the last several years, because they are old now, and made more uncomfortable by the camp's inconveniences, my grandparents have paid to have electric wires run around and bought a small power boat. On the night Babe died, my younger cousins were using the power boat to ferry the rest of the family home.

There were four separate family cottages at camp, but most of us cousins slept together on the sleeping porch of

---

SUE MILLER lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has an MA in Creative Writing from Boston University, where she held a university fellowship.

the large main house, the only one with a kitchen. Each child had an iron hospital bed, and we were grouped by families. Since I was an only child and Babe an aberration, we slept together. Babe had rigged up a curtain to separate our corner of the porch from the rest. She didn't mind my hanging around watching her paint her toenails or curl her hair. But if one of the younger cousins poked a head under the curtain, she was harsh. "No brats!" she'd snap.

In the early morning the sunlight reflected off the lake onto the whitewashed ceiling of the sleeping porch. As the air began to stir, the motion of the ripples increased until the ceiling shimmered with golden lights. I lay still and watched them—watched my beautiful aunt sleep—until my grandmother arrived from her cottage to the kitchen. With the smell of coffee and bacon, the squeak of the pump by the kitchen sink, I'd get up, easing my weight slowly off the steel mesh which supported my mattress so as not to disturb Babe, and go to help Grandmother make breakfast for the fifteen or twenty cousins and aunts and uncles who would rise when she rang the bell.

The buildings were all painted white, with dark green trim. Years later, newly divorced, with a one-year teaching appointment in the midwest, I chose those colors to paint my daughter's bedroom; and it was only as I recognized their source in the finished job that I realized how frightened and homesick I was for something familiar and safe.

My mother always sent me to my grandparents' for the whole summer. She herself would come up only for a month or so. My father stayed in Schenectady for all but the two weeks GE allowed him. He seemed uncomfortable when he did come up, as did the other brothers-in-law. They spent their time growing beards and fishing. The walls of the main house were dotted with birch bark reproductions of record catches, traced by the men in an unspoken competition that had developed over the years.

The sisters grew more expansive and thick as thieves as the summer wore on, seeming to pull away from us children. They told secrets, laughed at private things, often made fun of Uncle Orrie's wife, who clearly was never to be one of them. In general they seemed transformed into people we had never known, could never know. Into girls, in a sense, but girls whose club was private and exclusive and cruel.

Babe was, of course, not a part of the club. But she was also clearly not one of us cousins. Her singular status was a constant irritant to my aunts and my mother. They wanted someone to be in charge of Babe, her appearance, her language, her behavior towards the nieces and nephews. They turned in vain to my grandmother. She was, in her silent way, almost proud of Babe's eccentricities. She'd say, "Oh, that's just Babe's way." Or, "But you know, dearest, *I* can't do a thing with her." Neither could they, so she existed in a no man's land, nobody's child, nobody's mother.

She was sometimes a leader of the cousins, and sometimes tormented them. I was honored to be her ally in whichever direction she went. I felt I had no choice, and didn't want any. To be more than just myself, to be like her, that was the opportunity she offered me. Even now I feel I would have been a fool to say no. And when I occasionally tried, she made me ashamed of myself. "But, Babe," I'd say, "Aunt Rain *said*. . ."

"You want to grow up to be a creep like Rain?" she interrupted. "The most exciting thing she's done in the last ten years, she finished that thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle last week?"

And so I was her accomplice, for instance, when she decided we should haunt the outhouse. It was an ideal spot, in some ways. The path out to it was curved and tortuous. Roots leaped up from its surface to trip you. Industrious spiders could spin a web in the tiny building in the span of an hour to catch at your face as you stepped into the dark, reeking room. I was always terrified of animals biting me from below, and could never resist turning my flashlight into the hole to check for them; the sight of the lime-sprinkled turds of three generations invariably caused my stomach to clench.

Babe and I alternated stationing ourselves behind the building in the evening, just as the cousins were trooping out one by one with their flashlights for their last visit of the day. She was good at animal-like noises. I was less inventive and would merely scratch at the walls, or throw pebbles from a little distance once the cousin was settled inside.

Soon several of the cousins stopped going to the outhouse at night. Peering around the corner of the building, I could watch their approach, the tiny pajamaed figures stumbling along with the little circle of light dancing in front of them on the path. Now I would watch the light beam swerve off the path, stop, and then I could hear the steady stream of piss hitting the forest floor.

It was not long before the first shit was found. "Distinctly humanoid," Aunt Rain pronounced, and there could be no arguing. It suddenly occurred to several others that the traces of deer or bear they'd thought they'd seen could have been humanoid also. Grandfather organized an inspection tour of suspicious droppings. Then a family council was called.

There were seven children at camp that summer, including Babe and me. One, Agatha, was exonerated because she wore diapers.

My grandfather, as usual, took over the actual administration of the punishment. Some person or persons, Grandfather said, had been doing number two around camp. There was no excuse for this as everyone knew the rules, that in an emergency or if you woke at night, you could do number one outside, but for number two you had to go to the outhouse. He wanted the guilty party or parties to speak up. If they didn't, they would have to bear the additional guilt of knowing they caused all of us to be punished equally. We would wait.

In the distance the loons called tragically to each other. My grandfather was reading. My aunts' voices in the kitchen rose and fell as they prepared supper, and the water lapped steadily on the tiny rocky beach where the rowboats were pulled up on their rotting slips.

There was a little whispering among the seven-year-olds. My grandfather's eyes did not rise from the page, but his voice was sharp. "There will be no collusion!" The profound silence fell again. Grandmother brought him out a cup of tea and looked worriedly around at us all, her eyes resting an instant longer on Babe and me than on anyone else. Finally, after about fifteen minutes, one seven-year-old capitulated. "I did some of 'em, Gramps." He could barely be heard. A rush to confess followed, and three of the boys admitted responsibility.

Their punishment was twofold. They had to clean up all the piles. (They were heard grumbling, "Geez, we didn't do *all* these!") And they had to scrape and repaint the peeling, stinking outhouse, inside and out. Babe claimed she felt no remorse and curled up on her bed with *Jane Eyre*, but I went out several times and helped them. Once my grandfather, coming out to check on the work, caught me wielding the scraper and gave me a hard look, but nothing was ever said.

If the cousins ever guessed Babe's part in this or other misfortunes that befell them, it didn't alter their feelings for her. She was their heroine too. She was a born teacher, Babe, and she bound them to her through crime and her own special insights into the adult world. She swiped food regularly, and kept a supply in the icehouse which she sometimes shared. She pilfered cigarettes and taught us all to smoke. We had a meeting place, a dappled clearing far back in the woods; and I can see her now sitting on a rock, puffing a Pall Mall, her fuschia toenails glimmering on her dirty bare feet, and pronouncing all the aunts and uncles, our parents, a bunch of fucking assholes. She didn't even cough.

Another time she pulled down her pants and showed us where the hair was going to grow when we were as old as she was. We thought it was disgusting, ugly. We hoped she was wrong, that it wouldn't happen that way to us. But we adored her for doing it.

The few years after this Babe grew more remote from me. Her adolescence fell like a shadow between us. She was simply gone a good deal of the time, off with young men in power boats from the other side of the lake where the houses clustered close to the shoreline. They would come swooping into our inlet to get her, shearing off endless cotter pins on the unmarked rocks which studded it, and then hover helplessly fifteen feet from shore. We had only rowboats, so no need of docks. Sometimes I or a cousin would row her out the little distance, but often she waded out, holding a bundle of dry clothes out of the water with one hand, swimming the last few feet awkwardly. She often came back after dark, and occasionally so late that she swam in quite a distance, theoretically so that the noise of the boat wouldn't wake the family. The lake was so still at night, though, that I'm sure my grandparents lay in their beds listening, as I did, to the dying whine of the motor's approach, the murmur of voices, laughter, carrying over the still water, and the splash as she dived in. Her teeth sometimes chattered a long time after she slid under the layers of covers on the cold sleeping porch. Later I wondered if she was thinking of all those nights when she dove out of Uncle Orrie's rowboat.

My grandfather was always angry at her now, but his methods of punishment had no effect on Babe. He was stony with her. I heard him talk more than once of her betraying his trust. He withdrew from her his charm and warmth, of which he had a considerable supply. She simply didn't care. Occasionally he would force her to stay home in the evening. She would pace around the sitting room of the main house, where we all passed evenings together, occasionally stopping to try and fit a piece into whatever the ongoing puzzle was, sighing, picking up and putting down whatever book she was reading. She made everyone nervous, and we were all just as happy, in truth, to have her gone.

The two summers after this, my mother enrolled me in music camp, so I saw Babe only for a week or so at the ends. When I again spent all summer at my grandparents', she was nineteen, in college, and I was fourteen. From the start of the summer she was preoccupied and dreamy. She wrote long letters daily, and usually made the trip into town herself to get the mail in my grandparents' old Packard. Sometimes I accompanied her, as she seemed to be at a stage again where she didn't mind my presence. Once or twice we sat in the car for a long time listening to popular songs on the radio while the battery ran down. There was no radio allowed at camp.

She seemed plumper, softer, tamed. Yet, mysteriously to me, she still seemed to create a furor in the family. There was constant tension between her and my grandfather and aunts. Sudden silences would fall when I or the cousins came around. Yet her behavior by contrast with previous summers seemed impeccable.

I was myself preoccupied because of the music camp. Somehow, it was clear to me, the decision had been made that I was not, as my mother had hoped, musically gifted. My teacher's attitude had shifted during the previous year, from that of rigorous demand to a kind of tensionless approval. I knew she and Mother had talked. I would not go to the camp again. Mother said it seemed a waste of money, when I could have such a good time at my grandparents'. I don't remember that the decision about music had ever been mine, but I had accepted it and wanted to be good. Now I felt that my life as a serious person was over.

Near the end of August, Babe and I went on a picnic together to Blueberry Island. I swam briefly, feeling my usual anxiety about brushing against unfamiliar rocks or trees in the strange water. Babe lay in shorts and a man's shirt, with sleeves rolled up, and sunbathed.

I came out of the water and dried off. Babe sat up. We chatted briefly, about my mother, about how disappointed she was in me. Babe offered the theory that she probably lost interest in my musical career when she discovered you didn't wear little white gloves to play in concerts. I went down to the rowboat we'd pulled up onto the shoreline and brought back a sweatshirt for myself, and two blueberry pails. We walked into the center of the small island. screened from the lake by trees and brush, and knelt down to pick the berries. After a while, I asked Babe why everyone seemed so angry at her, why all the doors kept slamming shut on family conferences. Babe's lips and teeth were stained blue and she leaned back on her heels and said, "You might as well know now, I guess. I'm going to have a baby. I'm almost three months pregnant. They're all in a twit. They *hate* my boyfriend, he's not res*pect*able enough. They think I'm too young. Daddy brought me up here this summer to get me away, to bring me to my senses he said. They want me to go to Europe next year." Tears began to slide down her face. "All I want is just to be with Richard."

I was stunned and appalled and thrilled, just as I had been when she had shown us the secrets of her adolescent body. I remember I asked her why she and Richard didn't run away, and she said he had no money. He needed to finish college. He was ambitious and poor, and besides, he didn't know she was pregnant.

I asked her how *she* knew, and, eternally the teacher, she wiped her nose on her sleeve and carefully explained to me the way. Then she said she also knew almost right away by her body, how it looked and felt, and that was how Aunt Wizzy had found out about it—by seeing Babe naked and guessing.

"How *does* it feel, Babe?" I asked, knowing she would tell me.

She smiled. "Oh, wonderful. Kind of ripe and full. Like this." She held up a fat berry. Then she put it between her teeth and popped it and we both laughed. A sudden shy silence fell between us. Then she said, "Do you want to see?"

"Sure," I said, trying to sound casual.

Babe stood up and stepped out of her shorts and underpants. The big shirt covered her to mid-thigh. She unbuttoned it ceremoniously, top to bottom, and took it off. Then undid her bra and let it drop. I was silent, embarassed and aroused. Babe was beautiful. She had been beautiful even at my age, but now she looked like a woman to me. If her waist had thickened at all, it was just slightly, but a kind of heaviness seemed to pull her belly lower so it had a curve downward, and her thick fleecy hair seemed tucked underneath it. But her breasts were what most stirred me. They were still smallish, but they seemed fat, and the nipples had widened out like two silver dollars. She looked down at herself with satisfaction, and began, unself-consciously, to explain the sequence of changes she was going through. I remember she held one breast fondly and set two fingers gently across the pale disc in the center as she talked. If Norman Rockwell had ever gone in for the mildly erotic, he might have found a subject in us: Babe, beautiful anyway, and now lush, standing in a pool of discarded clothing, representing a womanhood I felt was impossible for me; and me, all acute angles, caught on the edge of pubescence, gaping at her in amazement. She smiled at me.

"Do you want to feel?"

I nodded, though I wasn't sure what I wanted. She stepped towards me, reaching for my paralyzed hands, and raised them to her breasts. Her skin was softer even than it looked. My skinny brown hands, laced with tiny white scratches from the blueberry bushes, the nails clipped short out of habit for piano practice, seemed hard, male, by contrast with her silken perfection. Her voice was excited, telling me—what? I can't remember. She moved my hands down to her waist, then to her abdomen. I felt her fur brush against my fingertips, dry, and yet soft. As soon as she loosened her grip on me, I pulled my hands back.

When we returned, my grandmother uncharacteristically kissed Babe to thank her for the berries. She cooked them in pancakes for everyone the next morning, and suddenly the whole family, with their blue teeth, seemed part of Babe's secret to me. Except my grandfather. His breakfast was invariable, grapefruit and poached egg on whole wheat toast; his smile stayed impeccably his own.

Less than a week later, Babe left, abruptly and tearfully, for Europe, accompanied by Aunt Rain. I rowed them across, facing my grandfather in the stern of the boat. He was to drive them to the train station in town. They each had only a small suitcase, but my grandmother was going to ship Babe's things to her later. As we walked up the path to the road where the car was parked, my grandfather pointed out places where it was growing over and suggested I bring the scythe with me when I rowed back to pick him up again.

Babe hugged me hard, and kissed me once, on the mouth, as though it were Richard she were saying goodbye to, not her niece. I noticed I was taller than she, and the taste of her tears stayed in my mouth until I swallowed. I waved to the retreating car until all I could see was the dust settling behind it.

That fall and winter I waited for news of Babe's baby. From the family came reports of her adventures in Europe. She was doing well in school in Switzerland. She had enjoyed learning to ski in the Alps. She stayed with friends of the family in Paris at Christmas. She sent me a card from Paris. It showed the Madonna and Child on the front—the child a fat, real, mischievous boy, penis and all. Inside it said "Noël". She had written on the back: "Life goes on, Europe isn't quite all it's cracked up to be, but the wine is wonderful, and I go through the days here agreeably, as I'm supposed to, a Jack O Lantern's grin carved on my face. Keep up the good fight. Love, Babe."

In the spring, striving to sound casual, I finally asked, "Mother, was Aunt Babe ever going to have a baby?" She was sewing, and she looked up for a minute over the edge of her glasses. Her mouth pulled tight, and then she smiled.

"Of course not, dear, Aunt Babe's never even been *married*. You knew that."

I recall that I blushed uncomfortably. My mother looked at me sharply, but then turned back to her sewing and nothing more was ever said.

My life went on also. My body changed in some of the ways Babe had promised, and I grew more comfortable in it, though not as comfortable as she would once have liked me to be. She seemed to shun most family gatherings. On those infrequent occasions when I did see her, she was usually fortified by a fair amount of booze and a new man. For a while after college she had a job in an art gallery in New York, and later at the Whitney Museum. Over the years I have drifted away more from the family, but apparently Babe had begun to effect a ginger reconciliation. The family party which was the occasion of her death was my grandparents' sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. I was absent, but I did make it a point to come to Babe's memorial service the next week.

We were lined up in generations in the church, my mother and aunts in the row in front of me and the other cousins. I could watch my grandparents sharing a hymnal in the front row, the one ahead of my mother. It seemed a reminder of our mortality, this arrangement; the blonde and jet black of my row giving way to the gray of our parents, and then to the yellowish white of Grandmother and Grandfather and the two extant great-aunts. My grandfather's voice sang out bravely and joyously the words to the hymn. My grandmother, I noticed, did not sing at all. The eulogy was short and somewhat impersonal, focusing on the untimely nature of Babe's passing instead of saying anything about who she was.

My mother and her sisters seemed to be crying occasionally in the church, but in the car on the way to the family luncheon, Mother expressed what seemed like resentment over my grandmother's grief for Babe. "After all," she said, "It isn't as though Babe were the one who did *anything* for her or Daddy all these years."

For a little while, there was a kind of deliberate sobriety to the luncheon, but shortly after the fruit cup the aunts began to chatter, and my cousins to compare house purchases, pregnancies, and recipes. Only Orrie, sitting on my right, who couldn't stop telling his awful story over and over; and Grandmother, stony at the end of the table, seemed affected.

I had to leave early. I'd left my daughter with friends overnight, and needed to catch the afternoon plane home. I went around the table, whispering goodbyes to those who might be hurt if I didn't—my mother, grandfather, and the aunts; then I stopped at my grandmother's chair, and knelt next to her. She swung her head slowly towards me like someone hearing a distant call. I realized she was still strongly sedated.

"Gram?" I said. "It's Anna. I came to say goodbye to you. I have to go." I spoke clearly and slowly.

She reached out and touched my face in a kind of recognition. "Say goodbye," she repeated.

"Yes, I have to go. I'm sorry I can't stay longer. But I wanted just to come, to remember Babe today." She kept nodding her assent.

"Edith," she said mournfully.

"Yes, Edith. I was so sorry, Gram." She nodded.

"I'm going now Gram. Goodbye." She stopped nodding as I leaned forward to kiss her. Her hand clutched at mine. Her grip was bony and tight.

"Don't go," she whispered.

"I'd like to stay, Gram, but my plane . . ."

"Don't leave me." I looked at her face. It stayed inexpressive, but tears sat waiting in her eyes. Impulsively I put my free arm around her and held her. "I can stay just a minute, Gram," I said, patting her back.

She whispered in my ear, "Don't leave me alone."

Her body felt empty but for the frame of bones. I held her until her hand loosened its grip on mine. When I leaned back away from her, her face was completely blank again. I kissed her cheek. "Goodbye, Gram."

I sat alone on the plane. I ordered a drink, but even before it arrived I had begun to cry. The stewardess was concerned; asked me if I were all right. I assured her I would be, I had just been to a funeral. As I sipped the drink and stared out into the blank sky, I realized that I had never before heard anyone in the family call Babe by her christened name. ☐

BARTON SUTTER

IN THE BELL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

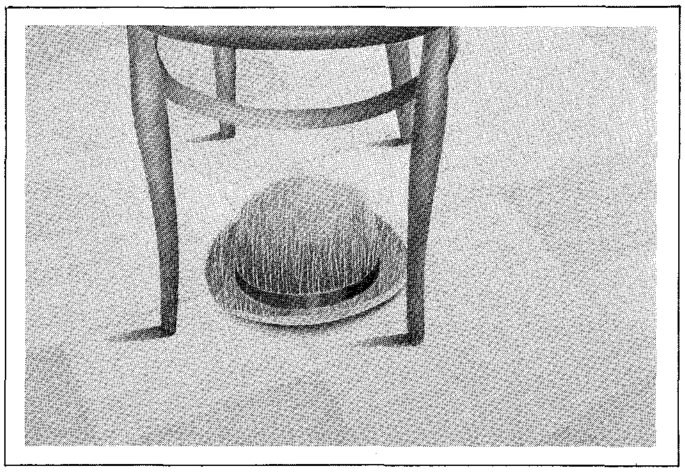
I was knee-high to the grizzly bear
When my old man first brought me here.
He held me up so I could stare
At timber wolves and white-tailed deer.
And here they are, much as they were.
I'm the one that's worse for wear.
The wolves still stand the way they did
When Dad explained that they were dead.

Cock and bull. Those bastards are immortal,
While I've grown old enough to be my father.
The woman I've brought points out a girl
Who gapes at the eagle spread above her,
Raises her arms, shrieks, and whirls
Away to attack her mother. My lover
And I can afford to laugh. We've got careers
In place of the family we might have reared.

We enter a room called Touch and See
Where kids are swarming an elephant skull
And clattering strings of teeth. Timidly
We pet some pelts while children howl
And egg each other on. Finally
I drape myself with wolfhide and skulk
Behind my friend who's put on antlers.
I grab her and growl in her ear.

Shutting out that pandemonium,
We window-shop back down the hall
Past panfish, pike, and muskellunge,
Past phalaropes, the males female,
A hummingbird the size of my thumb,
And pause to admire the soft pastel
Plumage of passenger pigeons. To think
These birds eclipsed the sun, and
they're extinct.

UNCLE TIM'S MASQUERADE



F. D. REEVE

The Oasis became our club. A place in the shade, so to speak.

"Our Inn of Court," said Henry Baldwin.

"Our library and seminar," I said.

"My post office," said Tommy the bartender. "My hardware store."

"The dry cleaners," Tim Dugan said and pushed his glass forward for another whisky.

Snow blanketed the old piers. You could see it out the window.

Henry said the politicians had taken the city to the cleaners.

I said that the snow had cleaned the city and made it beautiful. Because of the snow on the ground, I said, you could see into the depths of the city.

Henry said that was perspective, and perspective was man's deepest illusion. Whenever a man doesn't know what to make of something, he tries to put it in perspective. But what you really care about, Henry said, you want close.

"You mean, like Nora?" I asked. I wasn't taunting him; I thought naturally of the dark-haired woman, the other man's wife, that Henry had been in love with, and she with him. "Did she ever come East?"

"One time," said Henry, turning his hands on the bar, then turning them back, parking the adverb, "but it doesn't matter now."

"Better to be in debt," said Tim. "You get out quicker. Women and winter bring bad news."

Tommy kindly didn't pester Tim about his bill. One night I had wanted to pay it, but Henry forbade me. He said membership counted, not money. In a club, he said, each man pays his own bills.

"You didn't meet her?" Henry asked me.

"No, no," I replied. "You said she might come."

"That's true." Again, he left a sentence unsaid. No reason why.

"If I had a nickel for every girl I waited for," said Tommy, "I wouldn't be here today."

"Make it a quarter these days," said Tim.

"Right," said Tommy. "Changing times."

Everything's changing," said Tim bitterly. He raised his refreshened drink. "Here's to the old ways."

Sure, we drank with him.

"The point is," said Henry while Tommy refilled our glasses, "it wouldn't be winter without snow. When I get to the South Seas, I'm going to abolish it all—snow, Christmas, politicians."

I said something about oysters being in season and quoted Ariel's song.

Henry said that men suffer change as a plant suffers the Sun. In the South Seas, he said, everybody's the right color, and you don't have to worry about one or the other.

"Got to have water," said Tim, laughing and raising his glass.

"An island in Heaven," I said with a sweep of my arm.

"God help me," cried Tommy, "when I get to that club I'll put my feet on the fender and have the steward bring the glass to my hand."

"Down below, nobody believes in stewards," Henry said, "or follows the old ways. They have chocolate stewardesses."

"Nobody," said Tim firmly. He wore a gray shirt, buttoned, without a tie, a gray sleeveless sweater and a shabby gray overcoat. He had pushed his speckled gray cap to the back of his head; he now lifted it and reset it. His hair was thick and white. "There's not a gentile reads the Bible. None of the young."

"In the old days it took three men to chip the ice and wash the glasses and draw the beer," said Tommy. "Now there's hardly enough for one."

"You can shovel snow," said Henry.

Tim laughed in a loose-shouldered, defensive, Irish way. "You know, if I was rich," he said, "I'd take it down to Disneyland to show the real America in the snow."

"Yellow?" Henry asked.

In the awkward silence that followed, Tommy said to the three of us, "I was at the White Horse for a while. I don't remember you there."

"I was too young," said I.

"I was there the day Kennedy was shot," said Tommy. "I've tended bar all my life. You know, you get into something, and you stay. I didn't work for six months after that though. I couldn't stand people drinking and him dying like that."

Henry said we were all his children, those of us who were old enough.

Tim said that was a noble action, like when you have a death in the family.

Tommy said that the White Horse had been a club, too.

"O Jesus," said Tim, "it was a terrible club. I think there was a waiting list for each beer."

Henry said that he had seldom gone there. There were too many Village types. "Actresses with big woolly dogs," he said, "and lawyers in Irish sweaters."

"You remember that pink-faced Welshman was always shouting?" asked Tim. "Surrounded by girls, four or five?"

"He'd be so drunk I couldn't serve him" said Tommy, "so they'd get the drinks and give them to him."

"It's still a nice bar," I said, "with all the oak panelling and old mirrors."

"He died in his hotel one night," said Tim. "Four or five, and him drunk like that, no wonder. We took up a collection, because somebody said he was famous and left a widow without a penny."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"He was a drunken Welshman," said Tim, "which is the next best thing to being a drunken Irishman."

"How do you wiggle your ears?" I asked. "I've been watching you."

"O Jesus," he said with a toss of his head, "it takes mental concentration." He grinned and cracked his knuckles and, looking vacantly at me, moved one ear, then the other, then both.

"Old Ernie took up the collection," said Tommy, "for the widow and children."

"He did that," said Tim, twisting off his stool. "I remember he stopped handing out the chess and checkers on account of those types," he said to Henry.

"Writers and artists used to come in," said Henry.

"Not while I was there," said Tim, "though there used to be singing."

"They'd come on Sundays," said Tommy, "when they knew you were in church."

We laughed.

"Jesus," said Tim, rubbing his brow and scratching his head, "I haven't been to church since my mother died."

"They've changed the mass," said Henry, "turned the altar around."

"Nothing's the same," said Tim, "even where I live. There's a flower shop downstairs now, and a delicatessen on the corner. Like Madison Avenue without the governesses and the little dogs. I used to drive for United Parcel. There's a press prints wedding invitations, says it on the window. Al Charyn's hardware store is still there, but there's no customers now; inside, everything's covered with dust, and you can hardly see the old man moving around in the dim light. I've lived there more than forty years. If you cross to the east side and look up, you can see the Empire State Building."

"In the same apartment?" I asked.

"Crosby Paper is on that side," said Tim, "catty-cornered, down the street. Some of the old signs have lovely lettering. There's one says 'Preferred Papers.' That's Marquardt and Company. All gold. Lovely workmanship. They've been there as long as I remember."

Henry began humming "As Time Goes By."

"Fill his glass," said Tim to Tommy, "and put it on my bill. I don't care what kind of club he says we are. And the young man's, too. Jesus, we're all dying of thirst. You wouldn't know 'Fill the Bumper Fair' or 'A Policeman's Lot Is Not A Happy One'?"

Henry shook his head.

"Or 'When Cold In The Earth'?" Tim began reciting over the humming:

" 'When cold in the earth lies the friend thou hast loved,
Be his faults and his follies forgot by thee then;
Or, if from their slumber the veil be removed,
Weep o'er them in silence, and close it again.'

Thomas Moore," he said, "friend of Robert Emmett. Now, there were two Irishmen."

"Thanks," said Henry, raising his glass to him.

"Yeah, thanks," I said.

"On the house," said Tommy. "One war at a time."

We laughed. Again came an awkward silence, as if we had gone back to our corners to try once more to file orderly out of the room.

"Laid me off after fourteen years," said Tim. "Fourteen years and not one tip on Park Avenue. Can you believe that?"

"I can believe a poor man," said Henry.

"Oh, can you?" asked Tim. "Well, I'll tell you this"—he cracked the knuckles of his right hand without, it seemed, hearing the noise—"every man has his price, but a poor man has his pride."

"It doesn't weigh much," said Henry acerbly.

"In whose book?" asked Tim.

I suspect Henry was about to say, The good Lord's, because he opened his mouth roundly, then closed it. Maybe he was going to say, God knows. Anyway, he only shrugged.

"You should take up singing," said Tim. "The young man here sings, don't you? And Tommy's the most famous since the singing waiter of Naples himself, aren't you, Tommy?"

"Oi missed me profession," said Tommy as a lark, la-la-loo-lee-laying up an octave and a half. "Aaaaaaah," he sang, then hit it again; C, E.

If he wasn't nailing the notes on the head, I couldn't tell. I chimed in a third lower, more or less.

"O merciful Jesus," said Tim. "Do something fast or I'll be singing 'Erin go Bragh' by myself on my knees."

Henry said it was the holiday season, that's what we had the snow for, and began "O Come All Ye Faithful" in Latin. The other customers must have thought him mad, but most joined in. Soon the whole bar was singing Christmas carols, which we did for half an hour. A few people entered; no one left. Cold air came in with them on their clothes. The front windows lightly frosted, making the street lights sparkle. Henry bought one of the half-gallons of whisky standing under the big mirror and went down the bar filling each glass, no matter what was in it.

"It's lovely to have a drink," shouted Tim into my ear, "on a cold night in a warm place."

F.D. REEVE lives in New York. His poetry and fiction are widely published in both literary and commercial magazines.

"You don't often?" I asked.

"Think of all those who are cold and hungry," he said, "like Our Lord Himself."

Everyone at the bar seemed to have settled in; everyone seemed in the right place; I thought everyone else belonged. Then, like pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope, they shifted into a different pattern, and I saw that everybody was young, or strong, or confident, or making good money—except Tim. Why would it be wrong to give Tommy my extra five for him? You don't go to a bar without taking something extra.

On the one hand, I didn't believe it wrong; on the other, I foresaw Henry's reproach, heard his plea not to take away a man's responsibility, as if that were destroying part of him. Not that Henry would make a scene, but by a glance he would stop my hand in my pocket, hold Tommy's to his cigarette, and I'd end up feeling humiliated. I was very conscious of being younger than they, to start with.

Laughing, clapping, skipping a verse here, then more there, the singers broke off. They embraced and toasted each other. A couple of girls went around kissing everybody. More beer, more whisky, freshly lit cigarettes. The smoke quickly became tart; the front windows thickly frosted. Outside, passers-by moved like shadows on opaque glass.

He began softly. I heard him as he turned toward me, holding his cap before him with both hands, eyes down, entirely focused on the music. He so concentrated on it that you felt he was elsewhere, as if enveloped in light. Those of us around him fell silent.

" . . . whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?" . . .

As he picked up the strong notes of the second part, he raised his head; his face was flushed, perspiring.

"This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing . . ."

His tenor half-floated, half-spun its silken way through the soiled tavern air, joyous yet plaintive, as emotional as the old English tune itself, a voice that moved us all by its clarity and—well, not merely understanding or compassion, but, very credibly—love. Delicate, introspective, self-forgetful, romantic—as romantic as a true folksinger—he was singing like a golden bird, the one in the Irish poem.

"Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe the Son of Mary!"

When he finished the third verse, the Oasis was so quiet you could hear the refrigerator motor and, on the street, children calling to each other. Sure, he was an old man, his voice untrained; but in that lay the warmth of its appeal, as if the voice had brought forth his real self which, in nakedness, he offered us. A number of women were crying; I was on the verge. It was very sad and very beautiful. I couldn't say where I had been, but I felt that I had been close to the center of the universe.

Henry laid his hand on Tim's shoulder in a gesture of admiration and affection and said simply, "Do 'Angels We Have Heard on High.' "

The bar burst into applause. No whistles, no cat calls—applause.

Tim shook his head and shrugged in his apologetic way and slapped his cap on. "I'm dying of thirst in the desert," he said, "and here we are—"

"It was lovely," a woman told him over his shoulder. "Thank you."

Tim shrugged. "I was thinking of Jack," he said. "That's my nephew joined the IRA."

"The what?" she asked, as the applause died away.

"The Irish cause," he said. "He'll miss not having Christmas. You know, a regular American Christmas."

"Where did you learn to sing like that?" some type in a belted sweater asked.

"I tell you," said Tim, ignoring the man and talking to us, "once you start getting into it, each day you go in a little farther. It's a terrible war."

"All of them are," I said.

Conversations resumed. Glasses clinked. Tommy moved back and forth from ice drawer to beer pulls to bottles.

"Hey, Tim," he called out. "Why didn't you tell us you're the new John McCormack?" He held out a double whisky. "You looking for a manager?"

"Bless you, Tom," said Tim stepping up to take the drink. "To my friends," he said as he raised the shot glass. "And to Jack," he added. "He was the pride of his family." He swallowed the whisky. He smiled. His eyes watered. He set the glass down smartly. "It'll kill his mother."

"What?"

"And what is it, two weeks before Christmas?"

"Almost," I said. "Less than three."

"You know they wouldn't take me on as extra help because they said I could claim seniority? That's right; one month was all I needed. I tell you."

"Whose mother? Jack's?"

"I heard three days ago and haven't been able to face her. I tell myself I'm waiting for the letter, but that's an excuse. It'll kill her."

"Jack?"

Tim nodded, twisted his glass on the bar. "He was planting bombs. Blew himself up. That's what I heard, but I'm waiting for the letter. They thought the world of him, his ma and da. He worked with me down on the docks for a while, bought his ma some pink flowers she pressed and keeps in the bureau. I haven't the heart to tell her."

"Let's sing to her," said Henry. "I'll go with you."

Lifting his cap and pulling it back on, Tim turned to me, looked me up and down. "You, too, young man?"

"The Three Musketeers," I said.

He laughed. "That was a club, wasn't it?"

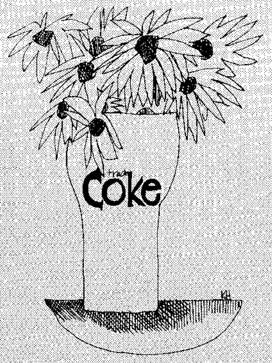
"In a book," I said.

"I'll tell you one thing," Tim said to Henry. "I never sang in public before. It came over me."

"I'm ready to go when you are," said Henry.

"I think I'll wait for the letter," said Tim. He turned to the counter for a last drink. "Things are all right, everything considered, the way they are." ☐

UNCLASSIFIEDS



RELICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST AT THE PUTERBAUGH MUSEUM AND MIAMI COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM PERU, INDIANA

ORCHESTRA PIANO ca. 1895. Formerly the property of the Peru Kandy Kitchen.

LINCOLN DIORAMA. A replica of the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. It and the rail fence surrounding it were made from wood cut on the Lincoln farm. Red clay soil from Kentucky. A bronze bust of Lincoln. A brooch that belonged to Nancy Hanks Lincoln.

HAT, DRESS, SLIPPERS AND PARASOL OWNED BY MARY ALICE REYNOLDS, THIS GOWN WAS MADE BY MARSHALL FIELD & CO. at a cost of $1,400 and was worn by Mrs. Reynolds when she was presented to Queen Victoria of England. Mrs. Reynolds, the daughter of Phillip Struble, was a member of a prominent Miami County family that located in Washington township in 1851. On October 12, 1872 she married Dr. George Warren Reynolds, one of the most eminent physicians of Chicago. He was a surgeon on board the vessel that carried Ulysses S. Grant around the world. Dr. and Mrs. Reynolds made several trips around the world. She was a talented linguist and spoke seven languages fluently.

GERONIMO'S WAR BONNET. Geronimo was wearing this bonnet when he surrendered to Government troops.

A PIECE OF THE ELM TREE UNDER WHICH GEORGE WASHINGTON STOOD WHEN HE TOOK COMMAND OF THE AMERICAN ARMY DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

GENERAL ANTHONY WAYNE'S SHAVING KIT.

MARK TWAIN'S GOGGLES.

STEAM AUTOMOBILE. Manufactured in 1900 by the Mobil Company.

PAINTING BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY. "Making Hay While the Sun Shines."

EXAMPLE OF DENDROCHRONOLOGY, the dating of objects by means of tree rings.

AN INKWELL PROBABLY USED BY HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

WHALE RIBS.

INDIAN ARTIFACTS. Note especially Frances Slocum's dagger; the pistol and dagger of Frances Slocum's husband, Ke-kip-shaw, who was nicknamed She-po-conah, meaning Deaf Man, when he lost his hearing.

SMALL UPRIGHT PIANO. Queen Victoria of England spoke at the dedication of the factory where this piano was made.

PERU'S LOST HERITAGE. Photographs and descriptive texts tell the story of the historical homes that have been razed.

PHOTOGRAPH OF TOM MIX WITH A LOCAL BOY SCOUT TROOP.

MRS. POTTER PALMER'S COACH. It was hand made at a cost of $3,500. Princess Eulalia of Spain rode in the coach when she represented her country at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

TOM MIX'S STAGECOACH.

BUGGY USED BY JAMES STUTESMAN WHEN HE WAS MINISTER TO BOLIVIA DURING THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S ADMINISTRATION.

PART OF A JOIST FROM LIBBY PRISON, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

HORSE FIDDLE. Used to frighten birds and squirrels out of growing crops, especially corn.

LARGE NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTION. The cabit, a cross between a cat and a rabbit, is one of only four or five in the United States.

EGG OF A MOA. This extinct bird was related to the emu.

THE EVOLUTION OF LIGHTING. From betty lamps to electricity.

COSTUMES THROUGH THE YEARS—AND WHAT YOU DIDN'T SEE. Hoop skirts, bustles and "chest protector."

LARGE COLLECTION OF SPINNING WHEELS AND REELS.

LARGE COLLECTION OF BABY CRADLES.

A PAINTING, "The Queen of The School" by James Whitcomb Riley.

COLLECTION OF SNAKES.

LARGE TOOL COLLECTION.

ADULT'S BEDROOM OF THE 1860s.

CHILD'S BEDROOM ca. 1900.

FARM EQUIPMENT (SMALL TOOLS COLLECTION).

TWO SKELETONS. Male and female.

SEVEN CASKETS, SHOWING THE CHANGE IN STYLES THROUGH THE YEARS.

DISPLAY, "FROM FLAX TO THREAD."

LARGE COLLECTION OF CLOCKS.

–Paul Genega

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

for Adriano Spatola

The rest of the story can be told briefly:
Since we already know how he suddenly returned after so many years in the cities—
Since we already know how he hiked through the forests and descended into the valleys—
The cows grazing quietly in the fields beyond town, the cold mist rising from the river in the early morning—
And beyond the river, emerging from the clearing mists, the steeple of the old white church—
That everything was exactly the same—
Every color, every shade, every contour of the beaten land—
Since we already know how he walked into the store, the farmers over breakfast discussing the weather and the crops—
That his sister pouring steaming milk into the heavy cups—
That everyone looked up—
That everyone *looked up*–
The sudden quiet—
The ravaged faces—
He and his sister staring at each other—
The rest of the story can be told briefly:
That he returned to the ancestral home—
That the blue winter light streaming through the windows—
That the father—
That the son—
That the mother stood silently to the side and watched—
That the father and son went out for a walk—
That the son began to tell of his travels, the carefree wanderings, the years of hardship—
That the father silenced him with a glance—
That the blue winter light streaming through the forest—
That they climbed through the forests and up into the mountains, where the alpine meadows were all covered with snow—
That the father began to talk of the daughter, who had married an unemployed roustabout—
That the stony silence—
That the walk through the meadows all covered with snow—
The silence of the meadows all covered with snow—
The horror of the meadows all covered with snow—
The rest of the story can be told briefly:
That the sudden shouting, the cows clumping down the slopes, the last birds taking to flight—
That the meadows all covered with snow—
That the gunshot echoing through the valleys, the town's people looking up and then at one another—
That the blue winter light streaming through the forest—
That he returned to the cities, another face in the crowds—
That the crowds—
The rest of the story can be told briefly:
The river, the steeple, the fields, the forest—
The hours from midnight to midnight.

–Michael Covino

AN EXPERIMENT IN PURE BEAUTY

For this experiment you will require: A transparent vessel, ideally one that will hold a quart or so of water. A panpipe. A vibration-free environment. A method of lowering the temperature to 30° Farenheit.

Run your lips over the panpipe a few times to familiarize yourself with it. Learn to blow a sound that progresses from low to high frequency in a pleasing manner. This is a completely subjective judgment. Are you pleased? Good.

Fill the vessel with water. Lower the temperature. Sit there with your panpipe and watch. Note that the water remains in a liquid state as long as no vibrations are present in the environment. Can you be still long enough to conduct this experiment? The ability to remain still is part of the aesthetic of the occasion. Shivering can be a problem at 30° Farenheit (minus one, Celsius). Try not to shiver.

After an hour or so, depending upon the size and shape of the vessel, the water should be frozen. But it is not. Why? A vibration is required to start the process. Raise the panpipe to your lips slowly, carefully, keeping your eye on the vessel.

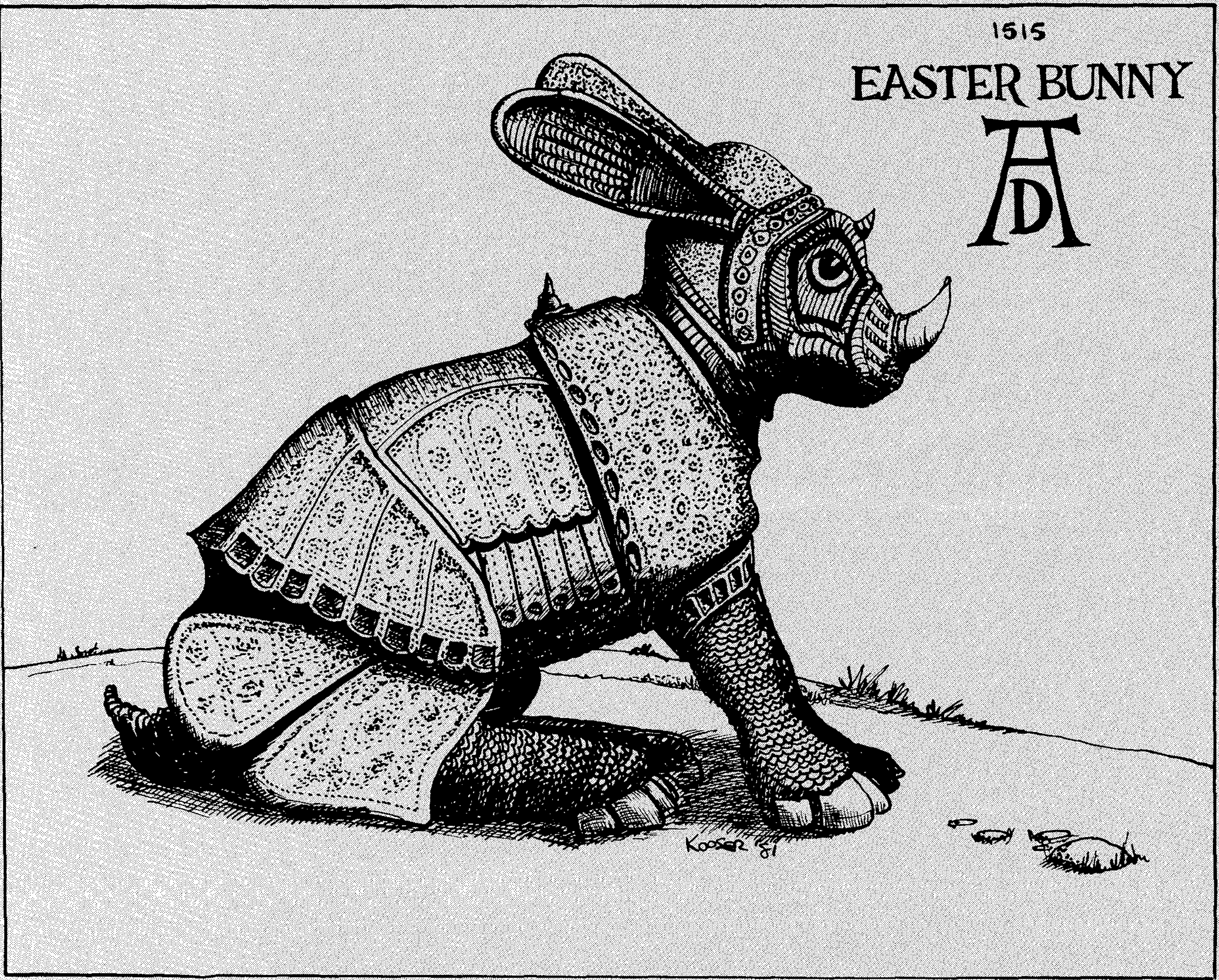
Blow.

In a moment the water has crystallized to ice, in response to the sound you have produced. The panpipe is still echoing—that is, the vibrations continue to exist in this previously vibration-free environment. The audible and visible forms of beauty which were implicit, and unified, have become manifest, and separate.

Variations: Put food coloring in the water. Try to relate the process of crystallization to the sound, directly. Film the crystalization in slow motion using a movie camera mounted on foam rubber and carefully muffled. The camera must have nylon gears. Shoot at 120 frames per second.

A further variation: Forget the panpipe. Clap your hands, or whistle. Try *thinking* about something that produces vibrations.

Having conducted this experiment, consider learning to play the panpipe. When you play, think of ice crystals and snowflakes. *–Bruce Rubenstein*



HAVING RECENTLY DRAWN A RHINOCEROS THOUGH HE HAD NEVER SEEN ONE, ALBRECHT DURER ACCEPTS A NEW COMMISSION.

TOURIST

In Vegas the main attraction is not the mirrors. Maybe. But everywhere you turn, you're looking into one. Men seek themselves in store windows and slot machines, in the glint of a coin. The young woman sitting near me at the bar avoids my eyes by staring at herself. She is afraid of getting old as me.

Any woman can wake up here, deciding what to do and, first thing, see herself in the ceiling. She stares, maybe in agony at sleep-tossed hair or bulky thighs, but at her own magnificence. Dozens of her reflecting in the bathroom combing, washing.

Even the Sun King wasn't vain enough to watch himself squat over a golden chamber pot. He saw instead, eyes of a bejeweled audience behold his morning defecation. Even he didn't watch himself in bed. Crowded with tapestries, carvings, courtiers that overwhelmed the mirrors, he gazed instead, with grace, upon their rapture.

Not divine, we walk his Hall, see between the marble green pilasters no reflection of Versailles' green gardens with their river gods and nymphs, but behold, always for the very first time, radiance of our own faces.

I would like to tell the girl in the bar mirror the replica of Michelangelo's David at Caesar's Palace is sixteen feet tall. Had he not been young when he saw his image in Goliath's eye, he would have chosen a size more human.

WILD TURKEYS

for my father and his

Wind from the north frosting autumn-stripped fields. The valley's hills and gentle wooded slopes down one side of the dry stream bed, then the other. As if nature couldn't decide. Halfway between dawn and daylight I am running, don't know why, half-dressed, 10-gauge gun and a pocket of shells for the wild turkey's song.

Would a mocking bird, I wonder, who'd rather anytime bark like a dog or whistle, ever want to chortle? Should guttural notes set so gracelessly on one another mock the siren songs that lure men from their beds?

Suddenly, they are there—hundreds of them, chuckling with bare wattled heads, some on the ground feeding on acorns. When the wood turns silent, they stare with a single, steady eye while I decide which one to kill. One burst of sound just as sound ends. My gun's blued-steel aim takes over, shoots at will.

The smoke clears. Nothing in sight, dead or living, a few scattered feathers. I gather a handful. Brownish herringbone, some white-flecked. From wings innocent as arms. Reluctant birds that would rather anytime rely on running.

Last summer I saw at the Field Museum the teeth of a tick, a housefly's tongue, the sucking structure of a culex mosquito: details of a man deciding what to do. I will send the feathers there. Each carries messages. You could talk to yourself and not hear them.

The mind is a tricky fugue. Men can't eat feathers.

APPALOOSA

A blind man can run his hand over the bright back of an appaloosa horse and tell you where the black begins. Texture is all. Sometimes I look at you and see no dark place in your smile, no outcry against the composition I've crafted so carefully since we met.

And I feel outrage. The dead center of a stone could see how you want me dressed in draperies. How even now I allow you to draw from me such a pure being she is neither yours nor mine. Could a blind man, I wonder, run his hand down the bright backbone of deception?

You don't believe me, but I read it, you know, how they actually feel stone from stone, the weathered equestrian's horseflesh and saddle from the rider's rough skin. And, if more to being than a blending of pigments and imposture, tell the taxidermic back from the hide of a living horse.

In Michelangelo's Pietà, do you suppose the classic composure feels different than death?

One day, when I trust you enough, I'll let you run your hand down my back. Touch beneath stone.

CLOWN

"They're laughing at us."

"I was just having fun."

"A rich reward?" you ask. "Taste might suit you better."

"Maybe, then, I should become a clown."

If I want to wear a flower on a peaked hat, I should. But even this wide territory of the heart confines the smallest antic into fear you will frown. Except I prefer to be me. At times like now I want to wear a cherry on my nose, to make up for accepting me in love the way I was even if they stared at us.

Sometimes, when I look at you, you have the grace and simple flesh of an exotic animal. I would like to hang you on the wall beside the bed where thorn bushes grow between the fine lines of our bodies.

The way you raise your brows over risky moments we must get through is like an arch threatening to fall, not from rough weather, or age, but many good-byes in guilt.

They're laughing at us. Maybe.

Waiting at the door, legs tucked up on the steps, necks curved into their chests, faces neither intelligent nor aesthetic, the wreckers with their ball and chain that can swing, when we grow hard enough, against our flesh and bring us down.

Before we let them in, ask love, who are the clowns.

HALLEY'S COMET

I David

Churches were swelled on Sundays. Rumor had it farmers might as well abandon crops. Halley's tail was poison gas, not nitrous oxide. But from the first, pure and innocent as a puppy with its tail pointing up, poking out of the horizon two hours ahead of the sun. Brighter day by day and according to some the cause of livestock blindness.

May twenty-first. A day when nothing spectacular happened at all. Only the keenest might, and some did, observe a change in the noonday sun. Days later, just after twilight in the west, an incredible sight I remember after more than sixty years—fanned parallel to the horizon, pointing north, stars behind clear through its faint luminous tract. Cylindrical, they said, but flat against the sky.

A few weeks later it disappeared. I added my age to its cycle of seventy-six and wondered: would I see it again?

II Bertha

I guess I was 8 or 9 when people said the end of times was coming, but the birds and frogs were singing all over, plants poking up green from the ground and our hen was hatching a dead duck's eggs. We still walked to church on Sundays, black sweet taste of haws in our mouth.

I remember the comet well. Different from him. It had a head and tail spread like a peacock or turkey. A hundred wonderful colors stretched way out. And I'm certain if I see it again it won't be the cigar or gun-tailed one he talks about.

That day our hen went wild when her goslings got in the water. She didn't care they looked like ducks to us.

III

I saw on t.v. yesterday they revised the distance to the moon.

–Mili Ve McNiece

CHRISTINE Z. SOMERVILL

SOME MORNING

Some morning
when you find
yourself lying awake
before you need to be
and you feel good
for no reason
but you notice
the sweet conversation the birds
are having outside your window
and the cool feeling
of dew the spring breeze
has carried to your bedside
Think about the way
my skin feels.

MAN AND WOMAN

The man watches the woman sleep. Her round belly rocks slowly, a smooth hill breathing. The light from the street lamp turns the veins in her swollen breasts a deep blue. He dozes, dreams of rivers, an endless network of cool blue lakes and rivers. He wakes, brushes flecks of sleep from his face, dozes again, wakes. Too hot.

thump

He sits up, searches the woman's face. Eyes closed, she is smiling. He places a hand on her belly.

Thump

He has felt it kick before, though not quite so hard. But he has never actually heard it. He never knew he could hear it.

It thumps again and kicks his hand away. He sees the rubbery foot-shape distort the globe of her stomach.

She sleeps on, one of her eyelids trembling with the wingbeat of a dream. Outside a truck rumbles past.

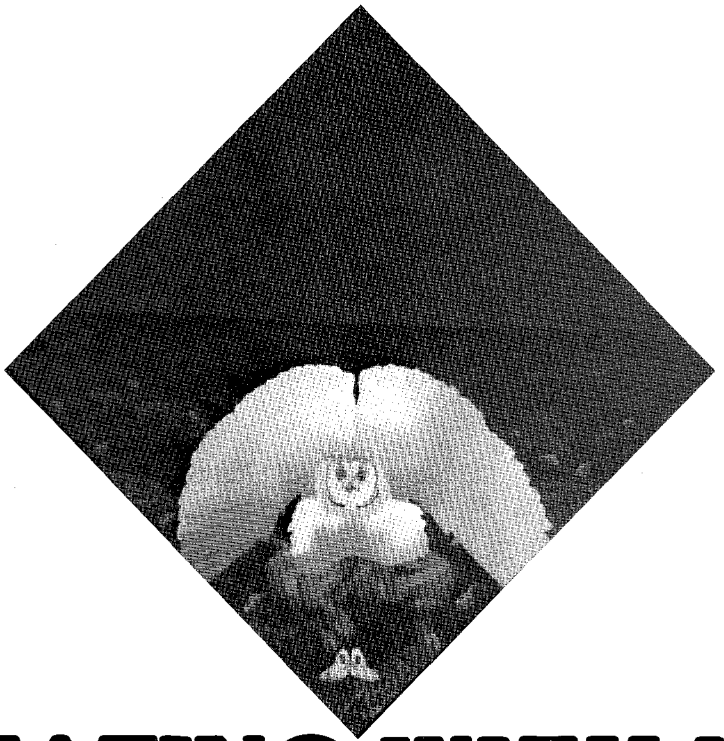
THRRR-R-RRIP!

A tiny foot breaks glistening through the skin next to the navel. The foot kicks at the air, emerges further, up to its knee. Blood races in dark rivulets down the slopes of her body and soaks the sheets. She sleeps on.

He grabs the leg, the flesh hot and slimy in his hand. He pushes it back inside her a little, pulls it out a little. A louder truck rumbles by. He releases the leg, its wet toes wriggling, then grips it again, looks at the woman's face.

She is staring at him, her eyes wide, deep grey, and very, very calm. *–John Calderazzo*

JONI TICKEL



HEATING WITH WOOD

Kindling

A friend asks, "You lived in Boston?" Don't make me laugh. "New York, then?" HaHa. The most of a westerner with an occasional pretension.

"Look here," I say to the friend, "I garden organically and I have a gadget attached to my woodburning stove that makes hot water for the shower."

There's nothing wrong, exactly, with having to prop shut the oven door with a three-foot section of two-by-four. There's nothing wrong with living without a thermostat or having guests sleep in a teepee. It's just that these living conditions tend to exact "mams" and "sirs" from me, where none is necessary. I "sir" the dentist, for example, who is ten years my junior, because I am convinced that his dinner plates match.

"There's not much time left for all this indulgence, all this waste," said Robert. "Been to Mexico City lately? And all of the prophecies. I have nothing to prove. I'm just prepared."

She awoke to find the bed empty, except for the cats. The closet was half-empty too, his suitcase gone.

"It figures," she said to herself, as she grabbed for her flannel robe, "that he'd leave on the first day of the season when a fire must be built." She trembled a little from the unexpected cold.

Wood I

The first of winter the snows come in with a windstorm. The second of winter leaves me blown and graying. My moods rise up above me, I imagine that they linger there, an aura, so that friends who visit might pluck down a disposition and place the selection in my hands, saying, "I choose this rare solicitude, I have a story to tell," or, "I am guilty, here is your anger to make me do penance." I would play, lest I lose all color.

It has to do with living away from the mainstream. It has to do with prices and payment and services rendered. Isolation can't measure a talent. Now that the harvest from our adobe farm is done, I must go to market, such a long way from here.

I've been distracted. This story has not to do with marketing, no. I looked but didn't touch, no. The weather, then? No. Auras and friends? No.

Planting hyacinth bulbs last week, waning moon, I uncovered with my shovel some broken glass. My husband, also planting, bent quickly to examine the pieces.

"Look at this, Anne," he said, "I think you've found an old kerosene lamp chimney." He turned the glass in his hand. "Yeah, that's what it is. See here? The curve of the base? It even smells a little yet like kerosene." He smelled it for a minute and then held a piece up to my nose. He speculated about its possible origin. "The builders of our adobe home, Don't you think?," he prompted me. I suggested that it might be the mayonnaise jar the children had filled with ants last summer and left to winter over. My husband smiled and quietly said, "Do you know how much we all have to gain by changing the focus?"

I'd already focused away, but stood my ground and responded, "Favorite remnants, dreaded fragments."

Maybe, then, imagination is at the heart of the debris the storm has left. Why do I imagine a bell ringing in the distant outside, after the wind has stopped? I walk into the bedroom to lie down. I get up. I get up and from off the wall I grab one of the hats which line the room. This hat I choose belonged to a Denver wino. I put it on and tuck my hair under it. The fury dissipates, but the smell of wine lingers.

II

The first winterstorm huddled up against the mountains just there in the distance. Something about the light drew my attention to the scene.

"The great late colors of the late great fall," I said to my daughter, as we were driving home.

My daughter groaned in response and then said, "Hey, Mom! Slow down a minute, will you? There's something I wanna look at."

I'd already shifted gears, as she turned around in the seat, looking past me through the window. In a field of brown grasses on the edge of a slow-running acequia, two boys played in the wreckage of an old pick-up. My daughter studied the landscape, eyes narrowed.

"Ford," she said finally. "Yeah, definitely a Ford."

I smiled across the seat at her, then I looked again at the rusting shell of the truck which she had identified.

"If you say so," I said. She'd already lost interest. She pulled down the visor to check her face and comb her hair in the mirror.

A few minutes later, still looking in the mirror, she said, "Those boys back there are spray-painting their initials on that beautiful old Ford." We were too far down the road for me to see for myself.

By the time we arrived home, it was afternoon. The morning fire was ash in the potbelly stove and the house was cold. My daughter did not take off her coat. She stood in the middle of the room and shivered, while I stuffed the stove with paper and kindling. As the flame ignited and I shut down the vents, she began to cry.

"I hate it here. I wanna move. It's just a lot of hassle." She wouldn't let me comfort her. She cried for a long time, saying over and over again, "This is a dumb place to live."

III

That night Walter waited up for his wife. He waited, lying in the light of the reading lamp. Wishing to make amends, he waited. When Anne came to their bed and turned off the light, Walter immediately drew her to him and touched her breast. He began to lift her gown over her knees, when Anne said, "You'll have to cut wood tomorrow. It'll be cold soon."

All movement stopped. Then, Walter leaned over his wife to turn on the light. He looked at her, he studied her face, before he said, "I'm leaving you, Anne."

She watched him pack in the morning. Not until he had called a friend for a lift to town, did she think to say, "I should be the one to go, Walter. Let me be the one to go, please."

"But, Anne, that's the problem after all. You won't leave. Sometimes, I think you'll never leave. Maybe this'll make it easier for you. I won't come back here, until you're gone."

There was a car horn outside. Anne opened the front door for her husband and stood watching as he wrestled his bags into the car trunk and then as he was driven away.

She pulled her red sweater tight around her nightgown, amused to discover herself still undressed. Barefooted, she walked down to the chicken coop to feed her hens. By the time she returned to the small adobe house, she had planned her day and was whistling a tune from a cola commercial.

She put on her jeans and the same red sweater. She vacuumed the house thoroughly, more thoroughly than usual. She was careful to sweep down the vigas. She oiled the latillas in the bedroom and bath. She prepared the last of the pumpkin harvest for canning. While the pumpkin was in the oven, she carried in the remainder of last year's wood and stacked it carefully next to the Hamilton Oak potbelly stove. "Tonight," she said, "I'll polish all that wonderful chrome," and she tapped a fingernail against the top nickel plate of the stove.

Later she took a walk through the desert. The sage and chamisa surrounded the house for as far as the eye could see—looking westerly away from the mountains. "It's enough," Anne said, but walking back to the house she felt the air getting colder. Over the mesa, Anne watched the clouds multiply and multiply darkly. "In the last daylight," Anne knew, "I'm going to have to cut wood."

She cut wood. She cut wood with the new bow saw she'd bought Walter for his birthday. She cut wood until her arms ached. As the sun set, she paused and clocked herself with the changes in the sky. The sun was trapped in color behind the clouds, streaking horizontally out of control, so like the color of blood, Anne could not look again until the red had paled. And she remembered how she hated her husband, but then she couldn't remember, and she tried to remember a plan she had made apart from the high desert and the mud and the sun and the winters she hated, but she was too tired to remember a plan she'd made apart from her husband's plan, she could not remember that he was gone and what was her plan. She could not look again until all the color was gone.

Inside, Anne built a fire in the Hamilton Oak and fell asleep lying on the rug in front of the stove. The cats slept close to her, close to the fire. While she slept, it snowed.

Anne rose with the sun, but an hour later she was still unable to start a fire in the potbelly. She knew that the flue probably needed cleaning this year, but she would have to call someone to get that done. The cats crawled under the stove looking for heat.

Anne was nervous. Walter had taken responsibility for the stove, though she had built her share of the fires. She

---

Joni Tickel lives in New Mexico. Future fiction is scheduled to be published "in various small presses."

tried not to think of Walter. She shoveled out all of the ashes from the potbelly, so that she could examine the grate. The grate was broken. The cats were crying and the plants were beginning to droop from the cold. "No," Anne thought, "Only my imagination, it's not that cold yet, not that cold."

Remembering, now, the unused hibachi in a shed somewhere, Anne ran outside. She was surprised and pleased that she'd thought of it and located the grill quickly. "It'll work for a while," she said. Back in the house, she fitted the grill over the hole in the grate and within a few minutes, a fire was going. She warmed herself with coffee at the stove. She was whistling when she began to peel apples for chutney, whistling again.

Anne was busy for a few hours. She didn't notice when the stove began to smoke a little, she didn't notice that the temperature in the house was dropping. When she opened the door to the stove to put another log on the fire, the house filled with smoke. Anne grabbed the poker. Wildly, she thrashed the stove. The smoldering wood crushed soon to ash, but the grill snapped against the original grate, the bulk of the cast iron lay in pieces in the ash at the bottom of the stove. "There's no way to start another fire," Anne thought, "No way." She felt her limitations as viscerally as she felt the cold.

Anne stood for a while looking into the blackened stove. Slowly, she walked into the bathroom to wash her face. She thought she might be sick as she leaned over the sink. She imagined that she was covered with soot and couldn't see. She began to cough and choke, as if from the smoke. Had she remembered to feed the chickens? Had she put the cats out? How could she cut wood, when all the wood was covered with snow and would be wet for weeks? Who could she call?

Who could she call?

Anne went quickly to the phone, unable to imagine that she had not talked to anyone since Walter left. "Of course," she said. "Of course I can get help," and she dialed her friend Robert.

"Robert? It's Anne. I wish that—I mean I need to talk to you if you could come here, if you could possibly come here, Robert. Robert? Oh, Robert, why on earth would a grown man want to be a pioneer?" She hung up the phone and walked back into the kitchen to put labels on her chutney jars and to wait for help.

When Robert arrived, he found Anne sitting close to the stove, trying to read a book, but trembling so, she seemed unable to turn the pages.

"Cold in here, huh?" he said. "Where's Walt?"

"He never cared that his style wasn't my style, you know? I mean Walter thought my getting a telephone was a goddamn act of betrayal. And now look what's happened. The cats are cold and all the houseplants are going to die."

Surprised by her own words, Anne began to cry, and again surprised, she cried loudly, recklessly, until her body shook and her knees gave way. Robert jumped up to steady her. In his quickness he threw over a chair. The noise of its hitting the floor frightened the cats, so that they jumped to the kitchen table and knocked off three quart jars of hot apple chutney. The glass broke, shattered shrill, sharp, with unexpected precision like a thousand nails on tin, and the house was filled with the smell, sharp, shrill, unexpected, of apples and raisins and ginger and cayenne.

The sweet, oh-sweet, fragrance drew away, absorbed the echo of breaking glass, drew away the tension. Robert stood with both hands under Anne's arms, her weight sunk against him, her head to her chest. He lifted her up with a calculated suddenness, jerking her out of her slump and then letting go. Anne balanced herself cautiously but quickly. Still crying, she took a deep breath. Her nose and lungs were stung instantly with the sharp odor of hot spice and vinegar and the lingering smell of pinion smoke and cedar. She looked at Robert. She looked at the cats crouched low and shaking on the ceiling beam. Anne looked into the ravaged kitchen and she smiled crazily. She smiled and wiped her nose with her hand and said to Robert, "It could've been worse." Robert smiled tentatively, when she added, "It could've been dill and cottonwood."

As they both tried to clean up the kitchen, Anne said, "Guess you're wondering why Walter left instead of me?"

"Didn't really think of it one way or another, Anne."

"But you know I've never liked it here. Walter's the one. He's the one who's wanted this place all along, everybody knows that. I should've been the one to leave."

"Why don't you go now?"

"Oh. Well. All I can tell you is the day before Walter left, I'd washed out my best pair of Levi's and hung them on the line. And yesterday, when I remembered them, it was already snowing. Was it yesterday? Oh, anyway, I think the minute it occurred to me that I could leave here as easily as Walter had, well, it also occurred to me that I would have to wait for my jeans to dry and that might not be until spring."

Robert couldn't tell if Anne was joking. He couldn't get rid of the fear that Anne might lose her balance again. He said nothing.

"Say, Robert, could the cats and I spend a night with you tonight? Just one night. Tomorrow we can see about getting this grate welded, or maybe you know of somewhere I could get a replacement? I just need a little time out of the smoke, you know."

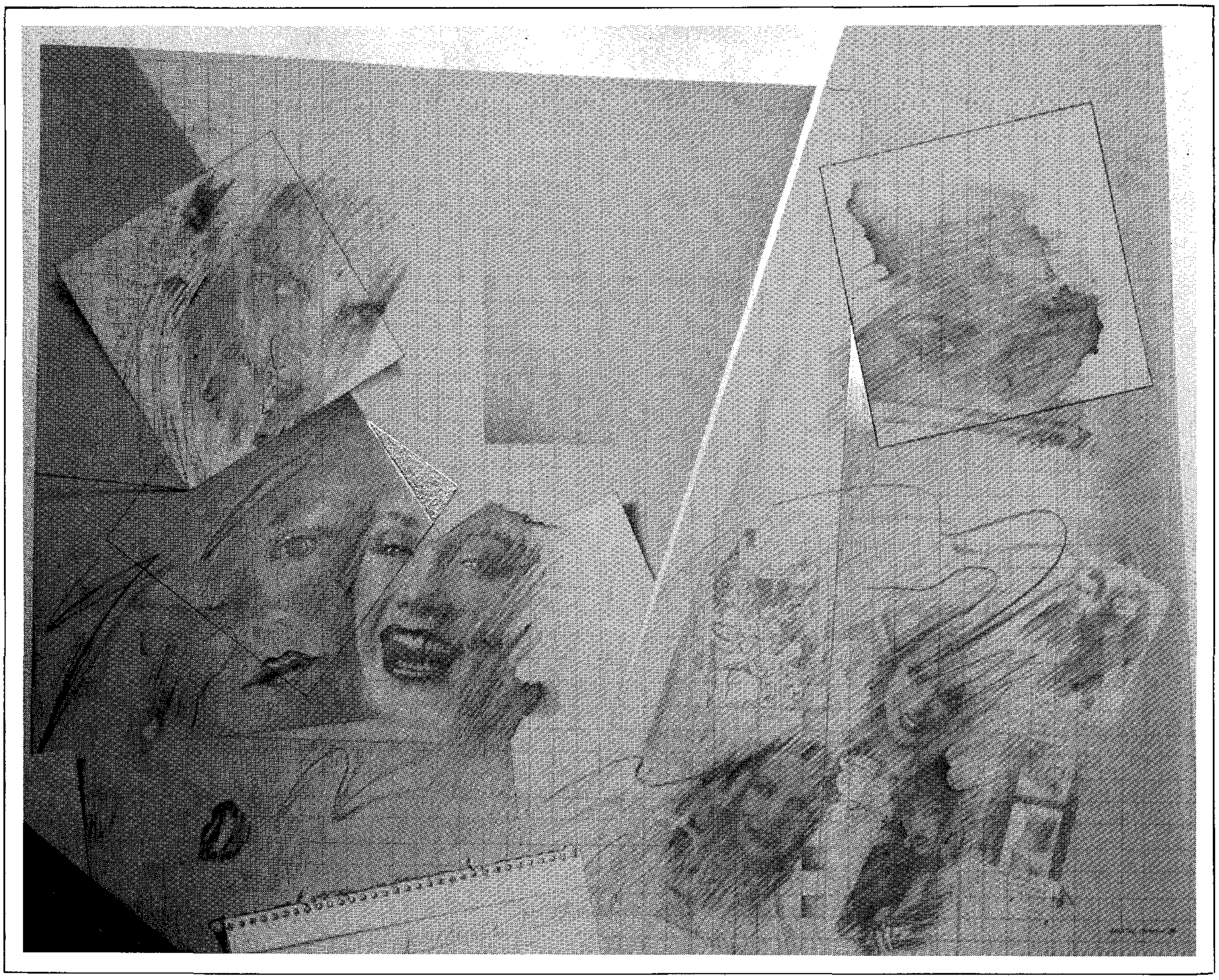
As she packed a few things out of the bedroom, she called out to Robert, "I don't know anyone who'll want those old chickens, do you? Maybe tomorrow I'll put an ad in the county flyer. Can't just leave the poor dear hens."

Anne, whistling, grabbed up the cats and her bags and her keys and rushed out to Robert's car. Inside the house, Robert took a quick look around, turned on the electric heater so the pipes wouldn't freeze, and set the bolt on the door so that it locked behind him.

Odd At The End

For example: I've never had a black eye. No, wait, I did once have one and I enjoyed it. It did for my face what laryngitis does for my voice. Husky mystery. Yeah, I remember now, I enjoyed having a black eye. ☐

THE FOUR MINUTE SHORT STORY — (AGAIN)



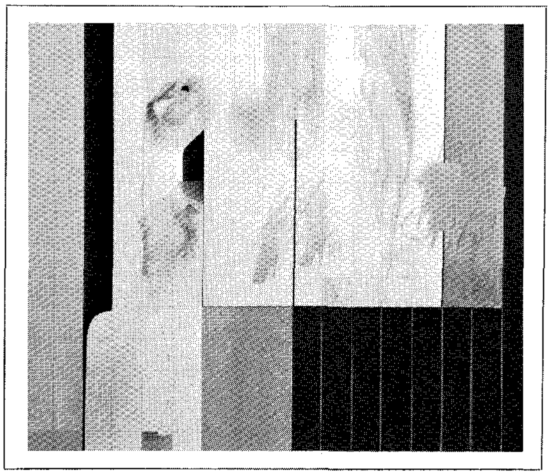
FICTION BY

JO SAPP PATRICK FOY BARRY LOPEZ
PAT THERESE FRANCIS DAVID CARKEET
JUDITH CARLSON and ALICE JUROW

Collages by Amy Marein

JO SAPP

NADINE AT 35 — A SYNOPSIS



The brain cells slip away, one by one by one. One hundred thousand of them a day, departing. If she is very still and concentrates very hard she can feel it happen. One by one by one, the cells descending to her rump. It is an exodus, a relocation. A mass conservation. Her brain is escaping.

And so, she discovers, is her husband.

"All I need is a little time," he says, his brown eyes wet and earnest as a cocker's. "Kind of a vacation from marriage. A year or two to find myself."

And she didn't even know he was lost.

She bounces back quickly. "So go," she says. "What the hell." Her vocabulary impoverished already by virtue of the missing cells. She figures she has lost over twelve billion to date, and counting, but is uneasy about numbers, so might be wrong.

"What the hell," she says again, and helps him pack.

In retrospect she realizes that his defection might be related in cause to her word loss. He, too, is over thirty-five, and has, in fact, been losing cells for six months longer than she. His, at least, did not settle in his rump. She wonders exactly where they went, but cannot summon the energy to look for them. And she cannot ask him, for by the time she thinks of it he is halfway to California.

She sells the house and buys a car, gets a haircut and prowls the bars. When she has the time. She cannot search for herself because, unlike her husband, she has yet to fully realize that she is lost. She would like to return to school, to become a nuclear engineer, or perhaps a dietician. There is, however, a problem. Only two worn suits, a set of golf clubs, three monogrammed neckties and a few billion brain cells were left behind by the vacating husband. The money he took.

So here she is, brain cells oozing out, slipping southward, with three children, a dog, two cats and a goldfish. Hungry mouths. She does what any other right thinking thirty-five year old American girl would do. She gets a job, subscribes to *Ms.*, deletes the word *girl*, as well as *housewife* and *mankind*, from her vocabulary, further limiting it, and decides to take a lover. As for the children, she has an extra key to the apartment made for each of them and tells them to fend for themselves. That is the American way.

Finding a lover is difficult. Lovers for thirty-five year old brain-diminished vocabulary-impoverished women are in short supply. Particularly for those with three children and miscellaneous pets, even if they do all fend for themselves. So she resigns herself to celibacy, broken by occasional chance encounters and bouts of masturbation. It is a not altogether satisfactory life, but it has its rewards.

She finds, to her surprise, that she enjoys working, and is good at her job. She is a teller in a savings and loan. So friendly is she, so helpful, and so accurate in tabulating the amount of money in her drawer at day's end, never having to add a penny secretly or take away two, that in time she is promoted to New Accounts. She will go far, they tell her, and she knows they are right.

She makes more money now, and hires a housekeeper. The children and pets are fended for.

She controls the numbers of her life.

The second vice-president of the S&L invites her to dinner.

She accepts.

She is promoted to Business Loans.

The brain cells still escape, but she has no time to notice.

She has found herself without really looking.

And then one day the dog eats the goldfish and the cats get distemper. Her oldest boy steals a lace bra and the girl gets the measles. The younger boy sulks. The sink backs up in the bathroom and the housekeeper quits. She finds twelve grey hairs at her left temple and her life insurance lapses. Her husband always handled that sort of thing.

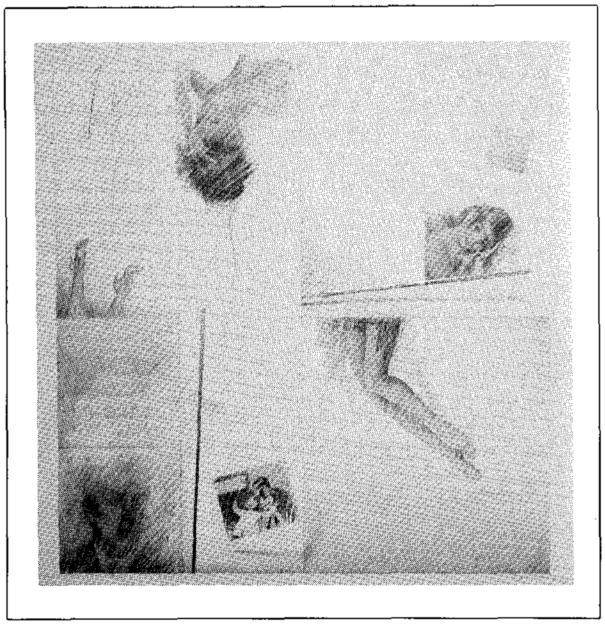
The second vice-president's wife calls her a name that she wishes had been deleted from her vocabulary, and she realizes she is no longer thirty-five. Then her husband telephones from Oregon where he has been working on a lumber crew and drinking beer and sleeping around since he left California and tells her he is tired of his vacation and wants to come home. She feels the cells slipping, and her rump widens alarmingly.

"What the hell," she says. □

Jo Sapp is working on a Master's degree at the University of Missouri, teaching and editing.

PATRICK FOY

PINK, BLUE AND GOLD



The girls played well, but it was not an obsession with them. They were French, beautiful, childlike and sophisticated, lived in the countryside, and had their own tennis court in their backyard and plenty of free time in which to play.

In the afternoons during that summer he would ride his bicycle over to their château, on the banks of the Saône, and they would play tennis. Afterwards they would follow an arbored footpath which led to the Saône, and they would go for a swim. The river was murky close to shore and cool. If the girls did not feel like a swim, then he would untie the old rowboat and row them out to a medieval stone bridge not far away, where they could observe the fish under the arcs, resting in the shade.

There were in all six girls and they were bright blondes. The eldest was nineteen and the youngest, five months. The château they lived in was on the outskirts of a small village near Mâcon. This was a region of vineyards and wine cellars which was formerly part of the Duchy of Burgundy.

Architecturally, the château was undistinguished. It was scarred and weather-beaten. It was perhaps two hundred years old. But it was a thing of beauty and made you daydream about the past.

One day while waiting for the girls to come out to play, he sat down under a tree in the backyard. He closed his eyes and listened to the leaves against the wind and to the sounds of an occasional car passing through the village.

Gabriel was standing in front of him a few minutes later when he opened his eyes. She was smiling. She put her hands on her knees and said, "*Bonjour, Jèrome!*"

He had been wine-drunk when he stepped off the train from Paris at the beginning of the summer, and on a whim he had introduced himself as Jêrome. He liked the sound, but it was not his name. It sounded especially good in French.

He lifted himself from the ground and shook Gabriel's hand and then gave her a kiss on the cheek. Gabriel pouted her lips in a playful fashion. She told Jêrome to follow her.

He followed Gabriel to the house, then through the kitchen, across the pantry with all those dishes in all those cabinets, and between antique furniture to the staircase. They climbed two flights of stairs, and arrived at a hallway on the uppermost floor, a kind of attic. The ceiling was low and slanted up there. Jêrome walked quietly behind Gabriel as she went down this hall and through a door which led into yet another passageway. She had not spoken a word since first greeting him.

Then Gabriel stopped in front of an unusually wide door and said "*Regarde*" softly. She placed a finger across her lips. She opened the door. They walked inside.

Across a small and irregularly shaped room Jêrome observed a round window, wide open. It framed the summer countryside below. A gentle breeze came from the window, and he could see the stone bridge downstream, a dark blue sky, and the Saône. The rolling countryside, interspersed with poplars and vineyards, led to the horizon. An old fisherman sat on the opposite bank of the river. Overhead, shafts of sunlight cut through the sky, turning the clouds pink in anticipation of sunset.

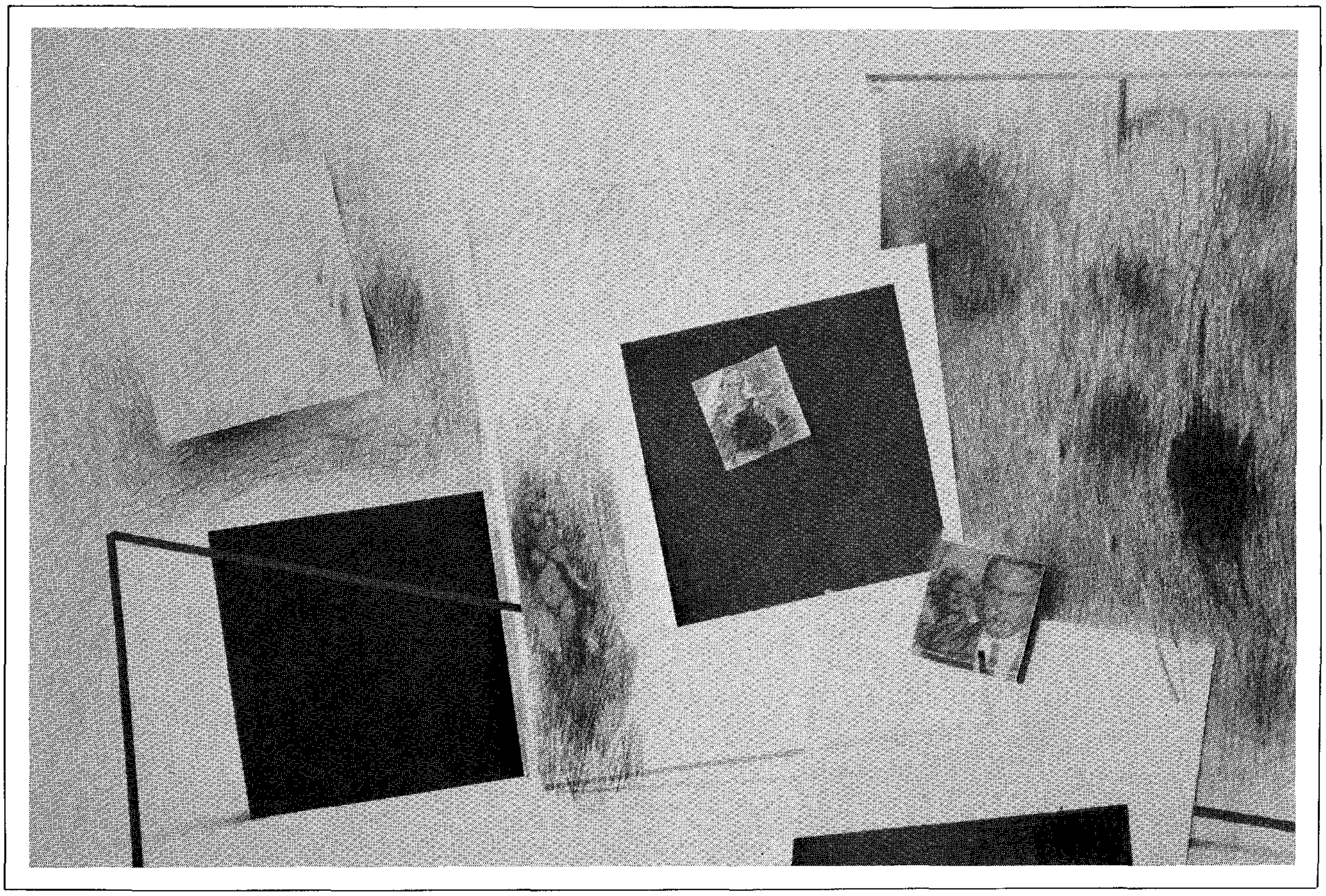
In the center of the room was a very small antique bed. An empty space of wooden floor separated it from the five walls. Down within the cozy interior of this bed rested the youngest member of the family, who was wide awake. She was staring out the window at the clouds.

When Jêrome placed his two hands on the rim of her crib, the child reached up at once to grasp a hand. Cheerful and excited, she held onto it as tightly as she could. Then her sister took his free hand and held it for a much longer time. □

Patrick Foy has traveled to Miami Beach from Columbia U. This is his first published story.

BARRY LOPEZ

THE MAN WHO HAD MAPS



The collection was stored in tiers of shallow drawers, of red oak with brass pulls, some of the drawers ten feet wide. They were all finished with exquisite joinery and slid open as smoothly as silk slides off marble. There were several refectory tables and Persian rugs over a parquet floor. The room was without windows, and might once have been a library.

He had begun collecting maps as a young boy in the thirties, Triple-A travel maps, maps he cut out of his geography books. The gasoline companies were just then beginning to print road maps, and on trips with his father he collected those, too. In high school he subscribed to a cartographer's journal and joined a national organization through which he could buy and trade. He discovered that he could buy among the effects of estate sales in large cities for very little. When he went somewhere with a friend in a strange car he would examine—desultorily, so as not to appear too eager—the contents of the glove box, and if there was a map there in good condition he would ask for it.

His collection was too haphazard and common at first to be of any value.

When he came to understand that, he boxed up everything he had with a vague embarrassment—a complete edition of road maps for Ohio, for example, produced by Rand McNally from 1928 to 1949—and put them in storage.

When he entered college he began to concentrate exclusively on maps with international standing. He bought with an increasingly sophisticated eye from Italian, Dutch and French collections. From the Italians for the quality of paper and brilliance of their engravings; the Dutch for detail and meticulous craftsmanship; the French for clarity of presentation.

In a little more than twenty years—he bought passionately and compulsively—he built a collection that was the envy of everyone in Europe and America. He had located and had bought several remarkable pieces—the world map executed in debtor's prison in 1589 by Michael Lok; the Delisles' map of Gamaland, which Bering took with him in search of North America in 1741; and, perhaps the most extraordinary, a hand-drawn map on rough cotton of the lower Colorado country, which central American Indians had given to Hernando de Alarcón.

Some say he came by much of this with crude methods, others that he did not. It is uncertain. He did have visitors call on him from all over the world. He set standards of purchase and he was aware of it. If an Admiralty chart was listed in the catalogs for $650 and he would not pay more than $200, it was worth $200.

When he was in his fifties, living comfortably, renowned as an historian and connoisseur, lecturing occasionally at Oxford, in Alexandria, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, he took his boyhood collections out of storage and began to market them. Within months the price of a Rand McNally road map, one which you might have had stuck away somewhere and considered worthless, was worth $30 in good condition. And the prices for them went even higher. People perceived immediately what was happening, but there was nothing to be done about it. He was the sole arbiter. Those who were interested (and not everyone was) began ransacking attics and scrapbooks. This is how I came suddenly on my father one evening, in a rage in the basement. He had collected road maps as a boy, too. But they had been thrown one place and another all through the years, until they had come to rest here, in rotting cardboard boxes, boxes he had said he would one day get around to throwing out. The maps, most of them, were as deteriorated as the boxes in which they lay, shredded by mice for nests, damp with mold—all but worthless. The market was only for maps in good condition.

My father was very shaken by all this, for we were not rich. He told me again and again that night as he pawed through the contents of the boxes how *close* he had come, that he had always insisted the maps would one day be valuable. And he had.

There was a rumor, ironic and perhaps cruel at the time, that a neighbor of ours had collected maps, mostly common road maps, and that in the bullish market that prevailed bids for his collection ran into the tens of thousands of dollars. He was a bachelor, an older man who clerked in a grocery store, and it was said he was something of a simpleton. My father's bitterness was incalculable.

I made it a point wherever I went to look for maps for my father and to mail them on to him. As I have said, it was not a pursuit that attracted many people and valuable maps were occasionally to be found in out of the way places. Some I bought for a few pennies, others, were given away for the asking. I was stunned when one man offered me three hundred some odd maps, after I'd spent an afternoon and the evening listening to him reminisce about having been a pathfinder for Triple-A in the thirties. We enjoyed each other immensely. He lived in the pine country north of Lindenhurst, New Jersey and breezes blew across his porch as we talked, as though we were at sea.

My father was able to sell some of what I sent him, to make ten or twelve thousand dollars, as I recall. He would imply, understandably, that it had been much more.

One day I passed through the town where the man who had maps lived and I decided to call on him. He was gracious and cordial. I had expected we would sit in a library, in large leather chairs with brandy, and discuss the extent of his influence in polite sentences, richly worded. But he was not that sort of man. We sat in an indoor garden and had drinks of fruit nectar, apricot and pear, thick and sweet, in cut crystal wine glasses. The garden was effulgent with light, the air moist and cool. He spoke about himself as though he were speaking of someone else. He wondered at the morality of his position, at his mercurial desires and at the uses of power. I was intrigued with the seriousness with which he addressed these problems. In the end he said he thought the reason for his sudden creation of a market for early common highway maps was anger, over injuries to his ego as a youth.

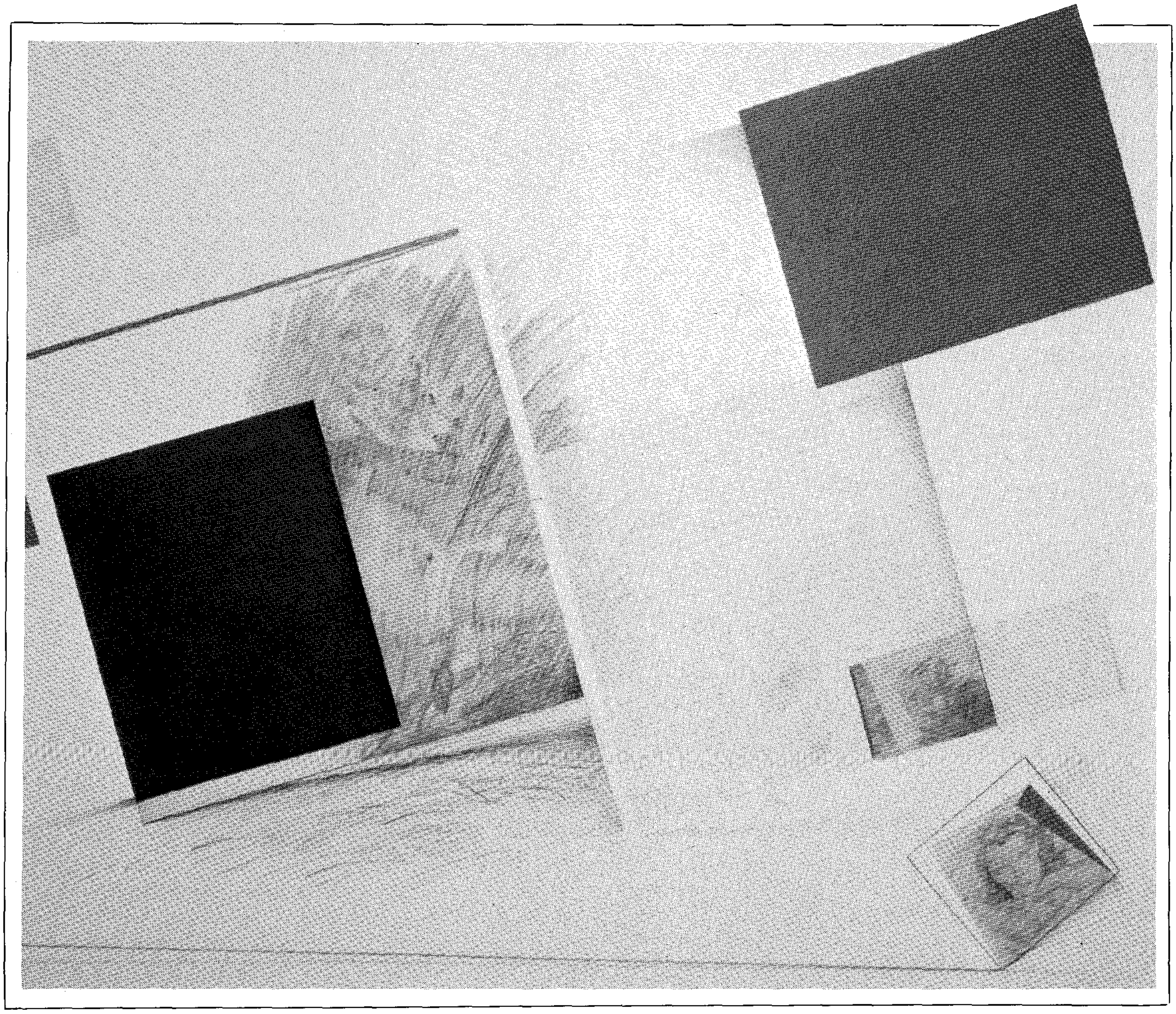
We had supper together in his home that evening, an excellent meal of squab and wild rice from Minnesota. He spoke knowledgeably of many things, of the evolution of the rules for mah-jongg, of the Farmer-Labor movement in the Far West, of his childhood in Ohio, and I was content to listen. We had coffee in the room where the maps were kept. The collection, of course, was staggering. It is not my passion, but I was excited by the feel of them, by the rumbling of a large parchment sheet buckling under its own weight as he brought it out. In my own hands he placed maps that had once been in the hands of Vasco da Gama, of Frobisher, of La Salle. I asked, like a neophyte, if I might see the oldest map he had. It was one of Japan, executed in 1305, with the south at the top. He purchased it, he said, from monks at the temple of Niana ji, near Kyoto. Under my fingertips it felt like the surface of leaves in the fall.

As I was leaving he handed me a small packet of road maps, wrapped with a wide gray ribbon and sealed with blue wax. For my father, he said. They were in perfect condition. Tell him it was only out of anger, he said, and shut the door quietly behind me with a gentle adieu of the fingers of his left hand. □

Barry Lopez's new story collection, Winter Count, *is published by Scribner's. He is, of course, an NAR contributing editor.*

PAT THERESE FRANCIS

SABLE'S MOTHER



The first time he came into me I felt it again—the sweetness that takes hold of you so deep it brings tears to your eyes, the sweetness you know you can never quite hold. Somehow things just never go right between me and the men people. As for this one, I knew he was half-crazy, in and out of the place polite folks call "the retreat," and married to that fat woman who sits out waiting for the mailman every day like she's expecting something. Lots of times I've wanted to go out and ask her what the *hell* she thought that mailman had in his truck for her. Lots of times I've been tempted to go out there and shake her heavy shoulders and say, "Don't you know ain't nothing coming for you? Nothing!" But instead, there I was in bed with her crazy man.

After Billy Snow, I really thought all of that was over for me. I had come to Billy with one baby, and when all the sweet was used up, I'd left with four. Now what did I want with more of that?

And you know, all I really wanted from that married crazy man was a ride. I was walking home from the grocery store with Scottie, my youngest, riding one arm, and a bagful of fruit and milk in the other when he stopped his beated-up car. It was hot; Scottie was tired and whiny; and my paper bag was about to give out. I guess you could say he came along at just the right time. If the bus to hell had pulled up when that crazy man did, I would have surely got on it, as long as it was air conditioned on the way.

I'd seen him before. I'd seen that he was built long and lean, that he'd let his wife get fat having his babies, while he just got leaner and crazier. I'd seen him, but not close enough to look at the flecks of gold in his eyes like I did when I found myself in his car. That's when I saw there was something still strong in him, something still hungry, something the woman who sat by the mailbox couldn't touch. But what surprised me most was that I found out there was something strong in me that answered him, something that wanted to lay down in his craziness and fuck until I had no tears left, until my back ached, and my arms were sore from trying to hold what I never could.

I didn't come. I never do anymore except when I touch myself in the gentle, easy way the men sometimes forget. I used to come and come, but now all the sadness gets in the way, and the only way I know to give in to the sweetness of men is to cry and ache.

I stopped taking from the men two years ago, a short time before Billy Snow left. If I could have faked, like they say a lot of women do, maybe me and Billy could have made it right again. It sure didn't help things any when he saw me lying under him with my eyes wide open, just staring as if to look clear through to his skull, as if to look right past everything alive in him and into the black hole behind it. One night when I lay there like that, not moving, not feeling, he just let loose and surprised my jaw with his fist. Once he started, he couldn't stop. He beat me till he came, till all the house was awake and full of lights, till I learned to cry and ache whenever a man touched me.

That was right around the time my oldest girl, the one I got before Billy Snow, started to grow breasts under her cotton shirt. She was only nine, like I'd been when I started to learn about the womanhood thing. "So fast!" I said to her, slapping her face, not because she was starting to become a woman, but because she *liked* the idea, because she started looking in the mirror a lot, tilting her face this way and that, and asking me if I thought she was pretty.

When she was born, I was fifteen. I called her Sabra, because I'd never known anyone named that, and because it sounded like sabre-toothed, or a sabre sword—something you better look out for. The first and only time her daddy ever came to look at her, he picked her up and rubbed her soft baby skin against his cheek. Then he unbuttoned his shirt and held her inside it against that close hair I used to love. "What you say my girl's name was—Sable? Is this my little Sable?" he said. He knew damn well that wasn't her name, but after he left, I never called her anything but Sable. I kept remembering the way he held her against him like he couldn't get enough of the feel of her skin, and the way he stroked her like a fine fur coat.

Now she's eleven, and the way the boys look at her could make me cry. Even Billy Snow, the last time he came by to see the kids, gave her that look I haven't seen rush to his eyes in a long time. "Come here, Sable girl," he said. "If you aren't getting prettier every time I look at you." Course, I just about went wild, slapping him right across his face, and reminding him he'd never been her daddy and would never be her man, so he could keep his thoughts to himself.

Billy just looked at me real calm and said "You know your trouble, Maggie Snow? You're jealous of that little girl of yours. You're jealous because she's got it all ahead of her."

"What would you know about what's ahead of her?" I said, lashing out like I was the one named after a sabre. "I'm her Mama. I know what's ahead of her—that's what's got me worried."

After he left, I held Sable and stroked her like her daddy did the day he give her her name. "So fast, girl," I said, but this time I didn't say it like I was mad, but just because I was her Mama and I *knew*. And somewhere inside her, she knew what I was crying about because her black eyes were wet too, and she kept saying, "Don't worry, Mama," and petting my hair like she was about a hundred years old.

That's how she acted that hot day I come out of my room with the married crazy man following behind me. I had put Scottie in for a nap, and hadn't expected Sable and the other kids back till supper, so I was a little thrown off when I walked out into the kitchen and saw Sable rocking Lonnie on the hind legs of a dinette chair, rocking and humming. She just looked at me standing there in the white silk slip Billy Snow used to love to take off, as if it weren't nothing unusual for me to walk around half-dressed in the middle of the day.

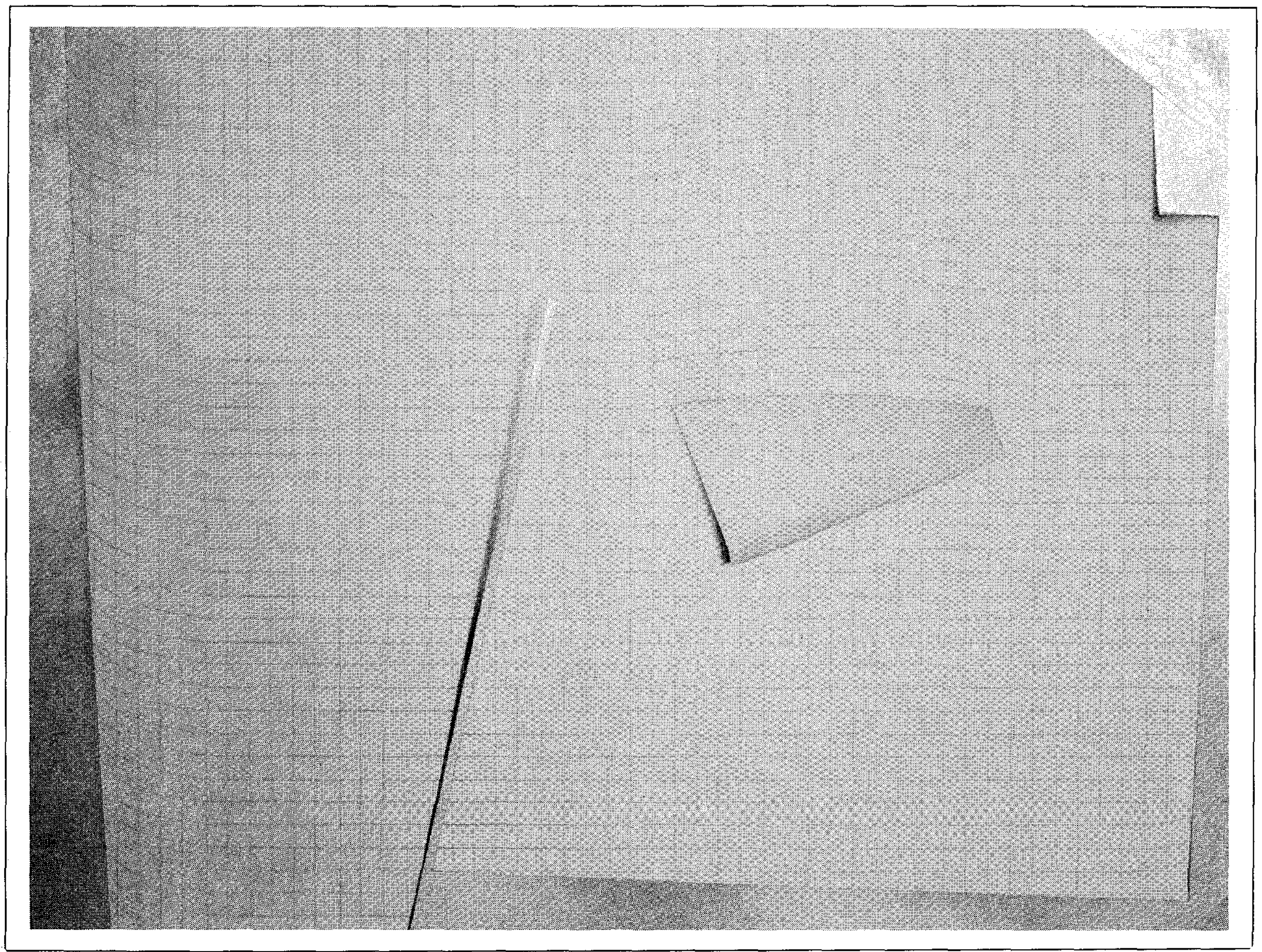
Of course, when he saw all my kids looking into his face, that lean crazy man wanted to be on his way as soon as he could. "I'll be back," he said, but even Sable looked at him like she didn't believe it.

After I took out the hamburger meat and canned corn I was going to fix for supper, I went to my room to change back into my jeans. When I come out, where was Sable but sitting in front of the mirror, trying on the cinnamon colored lipstick I'd put on for the crazy man. "Sable!" I said, already feeling how bad I needed to slap her face. But when she looked up at me, her lips dark, and her eyes still full of me in that white silk slip, there was nothing I could say. Nothing I could say at all. ☐

Pat Therese Francis has had other fiction in Prairie Schooner *and the* Massachusetts Review.

DAVID CARKEET

HOP ON POP



HOP
POP
We like to hop.
We like to hop
on top of Pop.
STOP
You must not
hop on Pop.
–Dr. Seuss

I am in physical danger. Chiefly my nose. The girls, as if they know my glasses are already too tight, take deadly aim with their fists and elbows. I scream in pain. It's their favorite game. Muh, Daddy. Muh gasses.

I've read about deviated septa. I think they've done it to me with their bombshell foreheads. I get less air in one nostril than the other. I have tested it many times.

There's also my neck. I never knew I had extra skin there. They know it. They squeeze and pull it without warning when they sit on my lap and are suddenly struck by a powerful insight.

Inside, the kids work on me. Outside, some men work on the sewers. When we hear the jackhammers the girls turn to me and demand an explanation. When it is quieter we go outside to walk and look. The workers smile at the girls on the sidewalk in their summer dresses. As if trained in perversity, I honestly feel sorry for the men for having to work so hard and not be with their own children. I say, "Say hi, kids," and the girls stare.

"Twins, huh?" one yells out from a ditch in the street.

Marie begins to whimper.

"That's right."

"Identical?"

Sally clutches my leg and moans like Benjy Compson.

"We don't know."

He frowns and returns to his work. I urge the girls along but they linger, preferring terror to obeying me.

"Dad, what was it like when we were real little—about two years old?"

"It was a lot of work. Your mother and I shared it, fifty-fifty. After considerable discussion we agreed it was the only fair way."

"Did you ever spank us?"

"No. That's barbaric."

"Did you ever have the urge?"

My teeth will ache with remembered gritting. "No."

To Marie I say, "Can you say *horsey*?"

"No."

"Can you say *ball*?"

"No."

"Can you say *no*?"

"No."

I howl and beat my chest, triumphant.

Sally holds a mushroom up and I ask before she can, "What is it?" She is an interesting thinker. Because words proceed from the mouth—this much she has observed—she thinks that nouns are best said with the referent *in* the mouth. She ponders—she is deep, this one—deposits the mushroom in her mouth, and slurs drunkenly at me.

To Marie I say, "Can you say *clown*?"

"No."

"Can you say *water*?"

"No."

"Can you say *no*?"

She shakes her head slowly back and forth and smiles at me like a war criminal.

"What did you do when you got mad at us?"

"I yelled."

"Just generally yelled?"

"No. I yelled right at you."

"And what did we do?"

"Stood there dumbstruck. Sometimes you smiled."

"Why did you yell, then?"

"Nothing else worked."

"Did yelling work?"

"No. Not until later."

"How much later?"

"About the same time that reasoning began to work."

"So you probably gave it up then."

"Oh, instantly."

Marie is over her tantrum, so I wipe the plaster dust off her and tickle her, my jaws clenched. She giggles ecstatically. Sally, drawn to our partying noises like a promiscuous sorority sister, demands the same thing and destroys our experience. I turn to her and create a new experience. Marie, abandoned, deafens me with her cry. I gather them up and try to tickle both at once. They laugh in spurts, haltingly, each watching the other for signs of superior pleasure. It is a poor compromise. We are all dissatisfied.

"You must have been incredibly patient."

"Yes."

"But what about all that anger? What did you do with it?"

"I re-channeled it along acceptable lines." (Inventory: two cracked walls, one splintered kitchen cabinet, one stomped Tommee Tippee cup, one savaged wicker hamper . . .)

In two years I have never stuck them with a diaper pin. This is because I am careful to shield them with my fingers. I have stuck myself dozens of times. They watch me swear.

The car seats are equipped with a protective lap bar that raises up for easy loading and unloading. It's a very heavy bar. As I struggle with the harness buckle a secret signal from one or the other of them brings it crashing down on my glasses, driving furrows deep into the sides of my nose. Each day I look more and more like a mandrill.

While changing Sally I nibble the inside of her ankle just above her saddle shoe. She roars with joy and brings the sharp heel of her other shoe down on the bridge of my nose. When they fix a deviated septum, I've read, the doctor must break the nose. He uses a hammer and chisel. I imagine the girls' widened eyes when they see the ski-jump brace and tape on my nose. The house will ring with *uzzat* for weeks.

"Dad, my publisher is sending me on an author's tour. Care to come?"

"Yes, I think I would enjoy that."

"Since you figure so heavily in the book it's only natural that you come along."

"Of course."

"We can catch Marie in San Francisco when she plays the Prokofiev. I haven't heard her do it since last year in Philadelphia."

"I'd like that."

"And in Chicago and L.A. we can stay with old college girlfriends of mine. They're single and after reading the manuscript are dying to meet you. You need to get out and stop thinking about Mom. She didn't suffer."

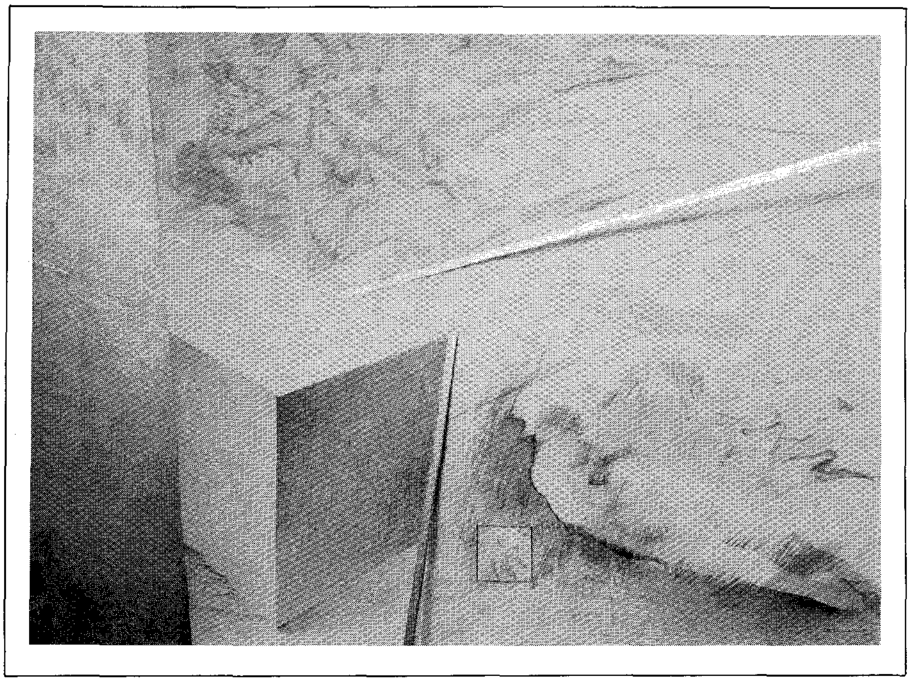
"I'd like that."

The girls nap. The clock ticks. I doze on the couch, waking now and then to the sound of the workers farther down the street now. I fall into a deeper sleep and find that I am in an operating room, incompetently sedated, while a baby-faced doctor straddles me on the table and holds a jackhammer to my nose. □

David Carkeet's short stories have appeared in Carolina Quarterly *and* Kansas Quarterly*; he is the author of* Double Negative *(Dial), a comic mystery novel.*

JUDITH CARLSON

SEA CHANGE



The Gulf of Mexico off the west coast of Florida is flat and bright in the summer, looking not like sea water at all as much as a piece of used tinfoil that has been crumpled and then carefully smoothed out again and left in the sun. It is hard to think of anything living in it, because it seems to have no third dimension. It only has edges, and at its edges one finds living things and dead things: jellyfish and coquinas and sandpipers and sometimes a big dead sea bass. In the early morning, old women in straw hats and smocks walk along the low tide picking up shells of mollusks. As the day progresses, young people with radios lie on chaise lounges in the sun and squint through the glare at historical novels. Only the children go in the water, where they splash in the shallows until they are sunburned and sleepy and their parents make them go back into the air-conditioned motel rooms. In the evening the water and the beach are empty again, although a few people stroll up and down the boardwalk and pier—bored young men who drink and laugh loudly at the jokes they make to each other, and old men who fish or sit on the benches watching other men fish. Neither group talks to the other. There is no surf, just a rumpling of the water by the wind, as though the wind were blowing the used piece of foil down the beach.

It wasn't unusual for Sue to go for a swim. Every day, although there was no one else in the water, she swam resolutely back and forth in front of the motel, marking her progress by the clump of Australian pines to the right, the sable palm to the left, and counting out the strokes to herself: twenty Australian crawl, thirty sidestroke, and then back to the landmark with alternating regulation backstroke and back crawl. It would make her thinner, she told herself, although she was already very thin.

Every evening she walked down the boardwalk to the pier to watch the sunset. Sometimes her lover came with her, sometimes he met her there later, but usually she went alone. Then young men would come to walk alongside of her and tell her their names and offer her beer. Sometimes she told them to go away as soon as they started talking, and sometimes she would let them walk along with her for a few blocks and chat with them before saying that she was on her way to meet someone and making them laugh knowingly. What she said had nothing to do with the men themselves, for they all said the same things with the same indifferent friendliness, and none ever got angry. They were a fact, like the sea breeze. She never looked at the men themselves, or even at the ocean or the sunset.

Her lover hadn't been surprised when she got up from their bed in the middle of the afternoon and announced that she was going for a swim, because she hadn't said it angrily and always made it a point of courtesy to let him think that he satisfied her. (*"Love is but a superior form of courtesy"–Flaubert*, he had written neatly in the journal which he kept hidden from her and which she inevitably searched for, found, and read). He would also never have thought of going with her, because the slipperiness of the dead jellyfish in the shallow water frightened and disgusted him.

As she walked back up the boardwalk to their motel room, she had already decided what she would say. It had been the first thought that came to her when she came back to the land again. He would look up from his book and politely ask, "How was your swim?" and she would

---

Judith Carlson's earlier fiction has been cited in Best American Short Stories, *and she teaches writing in Clarion, Pennsylvania.*

say, "It was the second most sensual experience I had today." He would like that, and besides, flattery always kept you one up on a person without his knowing it. But when she went into his room, where he sat reading with his back to her, she couldn't speak. He turned slowly, his face with the same expression it always had, mild pleasure at seeing her and mild annoyance at the interruption dissipating one another into a blank. Yet for the first time, she saw the old man's face in the young man's face. That line would deepen. That hollow under the cheekbone would grow more empty. His face wouldn't melt or sag but would erode like the pilings of the pier. She was so startled that in response to his predicted question she said, "It was the most sensual experience I ever had," and then laughingly shouted herself down with "Second most! Second most!" while he laughed at her with his old-young face. She stood hearing their laughter and wondering how he had become so old in an hour's time.

She closed the door and the swim once more had not yet happened. The beach was empty. She sat down at the water's edge and let the warm water nudge against her. She propped herself on her elbows and watched her body and the water closely. The waves were only a few inches high and broke so gently they left no foam on the sand; it was the unevenness of the waves that interested her. Some barely touched her calves and retreated, leaving only a sparkle of salt over her shins. Others came up over the edge of her bathing suit. She moved a little closer to the sea, so that every wave came up at least to her stomach, and others left only her head out of water. She watched the little white fish that swam close to her legs and even under her knees where the undertow had scooped the sand away. The fish hardly moved except to turn toward an advancing wave and away from a retreating one, so that they always stayed in the same place. Their skins were so white one could see their hearts and intestines.

Sue lay down with her hands under her head as above her a pelican hung motionless in the air. "I am going to sleep," she told herself, closing her eyes. The blue sky changed to an orange one while the pelican turned first black and then yellow and finally black again with a yellow-green halo surrounding him. The water slipped back and forth over her, and her body began to ripple inside from her breasts down to the insides of her knees.

Sue slowly got up from the sand and waded out until the water was waist deep, but still not cold, and leaned forward into a wave. This time the water felt different, and she swam not with the breast stroke she had been taught in swimming classes and practiced so rigorously, but with a smooth, almost effortless motion, not pushing the water away from her chest as much as pulling it down along her sides. She felt like a small boat putting out to sea, her head held up out of the water like a figurehead. Then she rolled over on her back and moved her arms and legs though the water, feeling every muscle held up, free of gravity. This would be what it would be like to walk on the moon, she thought, and wondered how those men could have ever come home again. The water formed little bubbles around her fingertips as she swam, making her nails look white as sea shells. The waves were higher now, and more uneven. Everything was changing. She pulled her legs underneath her and looked at her feet to see if they were turning into fins, feeling as though she were swinging from a trapeze in slow motion. She wanted not so much to see her feet as feel the movement of the muscles of her back, and she was delighted with herself for having found a way to look at her feet without having to look back at the shore. She wiggled her toes but saw no webs. *What funny things feet are*, she thought, and let them slowly glide back under her and push her out to sea.

Why should I ever go back?

Because if I don't, I will drown. I might drown even if I turn back now. The shore is so far away.

And a new voice said, "I won't drown. The ocean won't drown me. It holds me up. What a silly idea!"

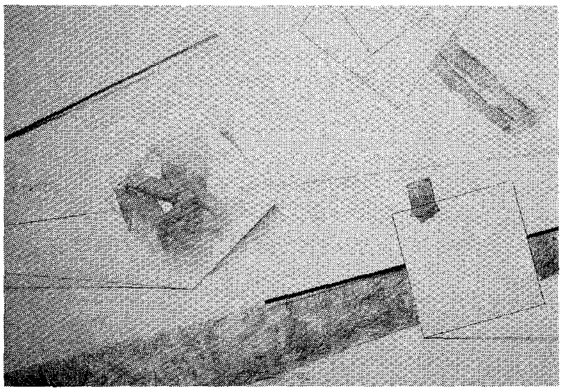
She opened the door of her lover's study to see what his face had become and he looked around, still old-young, but now angry. She closed the door just as he said, "Why do you keep opening and closing the door?" She knew that when she opened the door again, he would jump out at her like a jack-in-the-box and then she would look and see there was no body under the face and clothes at all, but just a silly spring. He would bob helplessly, with the same foolish, ferocious look on his face, until she closed him back into his room again. How could anyone be afraid of a jack-in-the-box? She wondered.

Sue was walking along the boardwalk, and for the first time she was looking out at the water. An uneven orange path spread across it up toward the low orange-red sun. The pier was the place to start from, but when she reached the end of it she only sat down on one of the benches and watched the old men fishing. Then someone dropped a bag of candy into her lap and muttered something. She turned to see an old man with crumbs in his beard standing beside her. His face was half paralyzed, which was why he was drooling crumbs and could barely speak. As she looked at the sea again, the mutter went on until she understood that he wanted to give her the candy. Instead of "Thank you," she merely said, "All right," and watched a gull soar in circles high above the pier, thinking that perhaps he was really as motionless as the pelican, and the water and pier and the old men and she herself were all spinning around underneath him. Then she looked for the old man, but he was indistinguishable from all the other old men fishing and sitting on the benches.

Later, when her lover joined her, he told her that there must be something wrong with that candy and wanted to throw it into the ocean, but she wouldn't let him and they quarreled about this. She took the candy with her from then on and ate a few pieces each night, sitting at the edge of the pier and dangling her legs while her lover leaned on the railing above her. He insisted on staying with her while she ate and looked down at her own bare feet. She watched the waves lapping against the pilings of the pier until the light on the moving water looked like a flock of seagulls swimming underwater and ready to carry her anywhere. ☐

ALICE JUROW

A LITTLE DEATH IN THE VENICE OF THE ORIENT



Habib Boktou, fat and inert, sits under a tree in a square of meadow enclosed by laundry lines and furnished with his pillows and water-pipe.

"You will want to stay here in Srinigar at least a week," he is saying. "You must see the Mughal gardens, the glaciers at Pahalgam, you must relax, you must swim—besides, you cannot go to Ladakh without making your arrangements. We will see about a hotel for you, and the food there—not good. Better to buy your provisions here."

"Here, yes," says the deep voice of the fat wealthy newspaper editor from Delhi, "this place is Paradise; even the ducks go by saying quack quack quack."

"Above all," Boktou adds, "you must not take the bus. If you can't get the plane or hire a jeep, you must stay here and become a Kashmiri."

"Ha-ha, not such a bad fate," booms the editor.

Gliding past waterlilies, close enough to see the trembling dewdrop on each one, Thalia drowses against the chintz pillows in the moist morning heat. The curtained shikara rocks like a cradle; she can hardly open her eyes long enough to nod at the mosques and islands and gardens as the shikara-man points them out. Back at the houseboat they are angry with her; she didn't ask Boktou's nephew to arrange the ride.

"Don't tell Mr. Habib," the shikara-man winks, as he prepares spiced tea for her outside the Shalimar gardens. The thick mug has a lassoing cowboy on it; has he rinsed it out with lake water? The tea is good and soothes her stomach.

There is a power failure, and the clerks at the Indian Airlines office, working by candlelight, are even slower than usual. The carved ceiling rises high and shadowy above pools of light. After an hour and a half Thalia reaches the counter, holding her place firm though a pair of Kashmiri men keep trying to insinuate themselves from the side.

"Yes, your ticket to Ladakh is confirmed for Friday," the clerk says at last.

"But the plane may not go?"

"Oh, the plane will certainly go. Twice a week, it always goes."

"But it may not land?"

"True," he admits. "Sometimes, the weather is bad, the plane must turn back. But don't worry. Your plane will certainly go."

In the afternoon, in her houseboat room, Thalia naps uneasily, inhaling the pervasive odor of sandalwood and shit. A paddle laps outside the window; she lifts the curtain, hoping it's a fruit-wallah with more cherries. But instead, it is a shikara full of bundled shawls.

"Good afternoon, Madam. My name is Butterfly. May I show you some of these beautiful things? Things truly worth having."

"Not right now, please. I'm not feeling very well."

"Just for a few minutes, Madam. These are the finest quality. Do you know why I am called Butterfly? An American lady—you are American?—gave the name to my grandfather. . . I will tell you the story; may I come in?"

"Not now, I'm sick. And I don't have any clothes on."

"All right," Butterfly says quickly, "I will come back tomorrow."

"No, not tomorrow; come Friday."

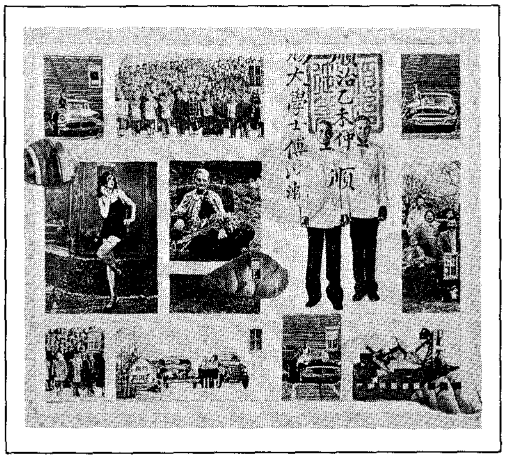
Mutton in a rich dark sauce, peas and potatoes, dal, rice, a plate of cherries. The Friday plane to Ladakh turned around in mid-flight, drifting clouds over the airfield in the magic Himalayas. Back to Srinigar and the flower-lined road from airfield to terminal. The Indian Airlines office mobbed. Boktou's nephew waiting, with a knowing smile, to take her back to the houseboat. Shit and sandalwood. The toilet has a tank and a porcelain bowl but it empties into the lake as directly as a hole in the floor. Runny yellow dal, an efficient food, goes straight through her body and into Dal Lake. Thalia kills a mosquito on the bathroom mirror, wondering if she should bring its corpse to Boktou, who has said, "If you find one mosquito, you stay here free. This place is Paradise." Rocking gently, boxed in carved sandalwood, she sleeps through the hot afternoon.

"Madam, good afternoon, Madam. It's Butterfly."

Complex and interminable dreams.

"Butterfly, you remember. Look, what a beautiful shawl for you, look, Madam. Reversible embroidery. This side, summer," a flourish, "this side, winter. . ." □

Alice Jurow is an architect in San Francisco, who "plans to return to Kashmir & Ladakh."



BOBBIE ANN MASON

OLD THINGS

Cleo Watkins makes invisible, overlapping rings on the table with her cup as she talks.

"The kids just got off to school and I'm still in one piece," she says. "Last night we was up till all hours watching that special and my eyes is pasted together this morning. After the weekend we've been through, now everybody's going off and I'll be so lonesome all day!"

Cleo puts her elbow on the kitchen table and switches the receiver to the other ear. Her friend Rita Jean Wiggins says she had trouble getting her car started yesterday in time for church; it flooded and she had to let it sit for a while. Rita Jean is worried sick about Dexter and is going to take him to the vet again. As Cleo listens, she notices that Tom Brokaw is introducing a guest who is going to talk about men as single parents. Cleo doesn't know whether to listen to Tom or Rita Jean. For a minute she loses the train of Rita Jean's story.

"Just a minute, I better turn this television down." Cleo crosses the kitchen and lowers the volume. "This house is such a mess," says Cleo, sitting down again. "And you don't know how embarrassing it all is—Linda's car here all the time, the kids going in and out. She's making an old woman out of me."

"Did she bring much from home?" Rita Jean asks.

"Mostly things the kids needed, and a lot of her clothes," Cleo says, watching the faces move on the television screen. "I told her wasn't no use carrying all that over here, they'd be going back before long, but she wouldn't listen. You can't walk here."

Rita's voice is sympathetic. "I'm sure she'll get straightened out with Bob in no time."

"I don't know. Looks like she's moved in. She went to trade day out here at the stockyard, and she come back with the awfulest conglomeration you ever saw."

"What all did she get?"

"A rocking chair she's going to refinish, and a milk glass lamp, and some kind of what-not, and a big grab-bag—a box of junk you buy for a dollar and then there might be one thing in it you want. I never saw such par'phenalin."

"Was there anything in it she could use?" asks Rita Jean. Rita Jean, who has no children, is always intensely concerned about Cleo's family.

"She found a wood spoon she said was antique."

"People are antique crazy."

"You're telling me." Cleo has spent years trying to get rid of things she has collected. After her husband died, she moved to town, to a little brick house with a dishwasher and wall-to-wall carpet. Cleo's two sons haven't mentioned it, but Linda says it's awful that Cleo has gotten rid of every reminder of Jake. There is nothing but the picture album left. All his suits were given away, and the rest of his things boxed up and sold. She gave away all his handkerchiefs, neatly washed and ironed. They were monogrammed with the initials RJW, for Robert Jacob Watkins. And now somebody with totally different initials is carrying them around and blowing his nose on them. Linda reminds her of this every so often but Cleo isn't sorry. She doesn't want to live in the past.

After talking to Rita Jean, Cleo cleans the house with unusual attention. The kids have scattered their things everywhere. Cleo hangs up Tammy's clothes and puts Davey's toys in the trunk Linda has brought. The trunk is yellow enamel with thin black swirls that make it look old. Linda has antiqued it.

Cleo pins patterns down on the length of material laid out on the table. She is cutting out a set of cheerleader outfits that have to be done by next week. The cheerleader outfits are red and grey, made like bib overalls, with shorts. Everything is double seams, and the bibs have pockets with flaps.

"Get down from there, Prissy-Tail!" The cat has attacked the flimsy pattern and torn it. "You know you're not supposed to be on Mama's sewing." Cleo waves the scissors at Prissy-Tail, who scampers onto Cleo's shoulder. Cleo sets her down on a pillow, saying, "I can't cut out with you dancing on my shoulder." Prissy-Tail struts around on the divan, purring.

"I could tell you things that would sizzle your tail-feathers," Cleo says. "But you wouldn't care. Nobody cares."

Cleo backs in the front door, pulling the storm door shut with her foot. On TV there is a Wild West shoot-out, and the radio is blaring out an accompanying song with a heavy, driving beat. Tammy is talking on the telephone.

"What do you mean what do I mean? Oh, you know

BOBBIE ANN MASON is a Kentucky native whose short stories have appeared in Bloodroot, Redbook, *and* The New Yorker.

what I mean. Anyway, we're at my grandmother's and my mother's going out tonight—Davey, quit it!—that was my little brother. He's a meanie. I just stuck my tongue out at him. Anyway, do you think he'll ask you or what? Unh-huh. That's what I thought."

Cleo stands in the hallway, adjusting to the sounds. Tammy's patter on the phone is meaningless to her. Linda had never done that. Linda had been such a quiet child. She hears Tammy speaking in a knowing tone.

"You know what April told Kevin? I nearly died! Kevin was going to ask her for her homework? And he said to her could she meet him at the Dairy Queen and she said she might and she might not, and he said to her could she carry him because his car was broke down? And she said he had legs, he could walk! I think he's mad at her."

"Watch out, Tammy, I'm coming through," says Cleo. Davey has returned to the television, and Tammy is sprawled out in the kitchen doorway. Tammy is wearing ripped blue jeans and a velour pullover with stripes down the sleeves. Tammy bends her knees so half the doorway is clear, and Cleo squeezes by, balancing the groceries on her hip.

Tammy hangs up and pokes into the grocery sack. "Chicken! Not again!"

"Chicken was 99 cents a pound," says Cleo. "You better be glad you're where there's food on the table, kid."

"Ick! All that yellow fat."

"The yellower a chicken is the better it is. That's how you tell when they're good. If they're blue they're not any count. Or if they've got spots."

"Oooh!" Tammy makes a twisted face. "Why can't you just buy it already fried?"

"Hah! We're lucky we don't have to pull the feathers off. I used to kill chickens, you know. Whack their heads off, dip 'em in boiling water, pick off the feathers. I'd like to see you pick a chicken!"

Cleo reaches around Tammy and hugs her. Tammy squeals. "Hey, why don't we just eat the cat?"

"Now you're going to hurt somebody's feelings," says Cleo, as Tammy squirms away from her.

Tammy prances out of the room and the noises return. The television; the radio; the buzz of the electric clock; the whirr of the furnace making its claim for attention. The kids never hear the noises; it is as if they were born on a train. Kids never seem to care about anything any more, Cleo thinks. Tammy had a complete toy kitchen, with a stove and refrigerator, when she was five, and she didn't care anything about it. It cost a fortune. Linda's children always make Cleo feel old.

"I'm old enough to be a grandmother," Rita Jean said early in their acquaintance. Rita Jean had lost her husband too.

"I think of you as a spring chicken," Cleo told her.

"You're not that much older than me. Louise is two years younger than me—and she's a grandmother. Imagine, 35 and a grandmother."

"That makes me feel old."

"I feel old," said Rita Jean. "To think—that the war could be that long ago."

Rita Jean's husband was twenty-one when he left for Vietnam. It was early in the war and nobody thought it would turn out so bad. She has a portrait on her dresser of a young man she hardly knew, a child almost. Now Rita Jean is old enough to be the mother of a boy like that.

"I'm old enough to be *your* mother," Cleo told her. "The thing is, it don't take long. They're grown before you know it."

Cleo told Rita Jean she could still get married and have a baby. She wasn't too old. She could start all over again.

"If anybody would have me," said Rita Jean.

"You don't try."

"Sometimes I think I'm just waiting to get into Senior Citizens."

"Listen to yourself," said Cleo. "That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard. Why, *I*'m not but fifty-two."

"They say that's the prime of life," said Rita Jean.

"Where are you going, Mama? Tell me where you're going." Davey is pulling at Linda's belt.

"Oh, Davey, look. You're going to mess up Mama's outfit. I told you seven times Shirley and me's going to Paducah to hear some music. It's not anything you're interested in so don't be saying you want to go too."

Linda has washed her hair and has put on a new pants suit, a tangerine color. Cleo knows Linda cannot afford it, but Linda always has to have the best.

Tammy, sitting with her legs propped up on the back of the divan, says, with mock surprise, "You mean you're going to miss 'Charlie's Angels'? You ain't *never* missed 'Charlie's Angels'!"

Linda gives Tammy a here-we-go-again look and doesn't answer.

"Them younguns want you to stay home," Cleo says as Linda combs her hair. It is wet and falls in skinny black ringlets.

"I can't see what difference it makes." Linda lights a cigarette.

"These children need a daddy around."

"You're full of prunes if you think I'm going back to Bob!" Linda says, turning on the blow dryer. She raises her voice. "I don't feel like hanging around the same house with somebody that can go for three hours without saying a word. He might as well not be there."

"Hush. The children will hear you."

Linda works on her hair, holding out damp strands and brushing them under with the dryer to style them. Cleo admires the way her daughter keeps up her appearance. She can't imagine that Bob would ever look at another woman when he has Linda. Cleo cannot believe Bob has mistreated Linda. It is just as though she has been told some wild tale about outer space, like something on a TV show.

Cleo says, "I bet he's just held in and held in till he's tight as a tick. People do that. I know you—impatient. Listen. A man takes care of a woman. But it works the other way 'round too. If he thinks you're not giving him enough loving, he'll draw up—just like a morning glory at evening. You think he's not paying any attention to you, but maybe you've been too busy for him."

Cleo knows Linda thinks she is silly. Daughters never believe their mothers. "You have to remember to give each other some loving," she says, her confidence fading. "Don't take each other for granted."

"Bob's no morning glory." Linda puts on lip gloss and works her lips together.

"You'll be wondering how to buy them kids fine things. You'll be off on your own, girl."

Linda says nothing. She examines her face in the mirror and picks at a speck on her cheek.

"Let me look at you," says Cleo, standing back to judge the effect of Linda's hair with her new pants suit.

Davey gets his lessons on the floor in front of the television. He is learning a new kind of arithmetic Cleo has never heard of, and she is no help. Later, she watches "Charlie's Angels" with Tammy and after Tammy goes to bed, Cleo watches the "10 O'Clock Report." She tells herself that she has to wait up to unlock the doors for Linda. She has put a chain on the door, because young people are going wild, breaking in on defenseless older women. She is glad she lives in town. It was scary out in the country by herself.

Cleo is afraid Linda's friend Shirley is a bad influence. Shirley had to get married and didn't finish school. Now she is divorced. She even let her husband have her kids, while she went gallivanting around. Cleo cannot imagine a mother giving her kids away. Shirley's husband moved to Alabama with the kids, and Shirley sees them only occasionally. While Cleo is thinking how Shirley's children are going to wind up in reform school, Johnny Carson is telling several jokes which flop, and he keeps breaking into the funny dance he does when a joke flops. Cleo usually gets a kick out of that, but it doesn't seem funny this time, with him repeating it so much. Johnny has been divorced twice, but now he is happily married. He is the stay-at-home type, she has read.

Cleo is well into the "Tomorrow" show, which is a disturbing discussion of teenage alcoholism, when Linda returns. Linda's cheeks are glowing and she looks happy.

"I thought Duke Ellington was dead," says Cleo, when Linda tells her about the concert.

"He is. But his brother leads the band. He directs the band like this." Linda makes her hands dive in fish-like movements. "He danced around, with his back to the audience, swaying along in a trance. He had on this dark pink suit the exact same color of Miss Imogene's panties that time in fifth grade—when she fell off the desk?"

Cleo groans. Everything seems to distress her, she notices. She is afraid Linda has been drinking.

"And the band had this great singer!" Linda goes on. "She wore a tight skull cap with sequins on it? And a brown tuxedo, and she sounded for all the world like Ella Fitzgerald. Boy, was she sexy. She had a real deep voice, but she could go real high at times."

Linda unscrews a quart of Coke from the refrigerator and pours herself a glass. She drinks the Coke thirstily. "I wouldn't be explaining all this to you if you had gone. I tried to get you to go with me."

"It was too far." Cleo turns off the TV.

"Shirley had on the darlingest outfit. It had these pleats—what do you want, Davey?"

Davey is trailing a quilt into the living room. "I couldn't sleep," he whines. "The big girls was going to get me."

"He mean's Charlie's Angels," says Cleo. "We were watching them and they kept him awake."

"He's had a bad dream. Here, hon." Linda hugs Davey and takes him back to bed.

"I worked myself to death yesterday getting this house in shape and it looks like a cyclone hit it," Cleo says to Rita Jean on the telephone the next morning. "First, tell me how's Dexter."

Cleo listens to Rita Jean's account of Dexter's trip to the vet. "He said there's nothing to do now but wait. He's not suffering any, and the vet said it would be all right if I keep him at home. He's asleep most of the time. He's the pitifulest thing."

Rita Jean's cat is thirteen. After the news came from Vietnam, Rita Jean got a cat and then another cat when the first one got run over. The present cat she has kept in the house all its life.

"The one thing about cats," says Cleo, trying to sound comforting, "is that there's more where that one come from. You'll grieve, but you'll get over it and get you another cat."

"I guess so."

Cleo tells about Linda's night out. "She was dolled up so pretty she looked like she was going out on a date! She looked like she used to look in school when she'd get ready to go out with Bob. It made me feel so funny. She had on a new pants suit. The kids didn't want her to go, either. They know something's wrong. They never miss a thing."

"Kids don't miss much," Rita Jean agrees.

"And how in the world does she think they can afford to keep on like they've been doing? But I think they'll get back together."

"Surely they will."

"Knock on wood." Cleo has to stretch to reach the door facing. She is getting a headache. Absently, she watches the "Today" credits roll by as Rita Jean tells about her brother's trip out West. He tried to get her to go along, but she couldn't think of closing her house up and she wouldn't leave Dexter.

"They went to the Grand Canyon and Yosemite and a bunch of other places," Rita Jean says. "You should see the load of pictures they took. They must of takened a bushel."

"It must be something to be able to take off like that," Cleo says. "I never had the chance when we lived on the farm, and now, I think I'd just be too afraid. Too many maniacs on the road." Cleo sips her coffee, knowing it will aggravate her headache. "The way things are going around here, I think maybe I ought to go out West. I think I'll just get me a wig and go running around!" Cleo laughs at herself, but a pain jabs at her temple. Rita Jean laughs, and Cleo goes on, "I think Linda's going to have it out with Bob finally. They're going to meet over at the lake one day next week. It wasn't none of my business but I tried to tell her she ought to simmer down and think it over."

"I think they'll patch it up, Cleo. I really do."

"That Bob Isbell was always the best thing!" Cleo leans back in her chair, almost dreamily. "I tell you, girl, I couldn't have survived if it hadn't been for him when Jake passed away. He was here every hour; he set up all night with him that night; he seen to it that we all got to where we was going; he took care of the house here and then went back and took care of their house. He was even washing dishes. Davey was little-bitty then. Of course none of us could think straight and we didn't see right then all he was doing, but don't you know we appreciated it. I never will forget how good he was."

"He always was good to the kids."

"Why lord yes; they had to pinch them pennies, but those kids never did without. He makes good at the lumber yard, and with what Linda brings in from the K-Mart, they're pretty well off. That house is just as fine as can be—and Linda walks off and leaves it! You just can't tell me he done her that way, the way she said. And she don't seem to care! She doesn't act like anything's bothering her."

"She's keeping it in."

"I keep half-way expecting Bob to pull in the driveway, but he hasn't called or said boo to the kids or anything. I don't want to run them out, but I'll be glad when they get this thing worked out! They're tearing up jack! There's always something a-going. A washing machine or the dishwasher. The television, of course. I never saw so many dishes as these younguns can mess up. I never aimed to be feeding Cox's Army! And they just strow like you've never seen. Right through the middle of the living room. Here comes one dropping this and that, and then right behind here comes the other one. Prissy-Tail's got her tail tied up in knots with all the combustion here!"

Cleo stands up. She has to get an aspirin. "Well, I'll let you get back to your doodling!"

When Cleo starts toward the refrigerator to get ice water, Prissy-Tail bounds straight out of the living room and beats her to the refrigerator.

"You're going to throw me down," she cries.

She gives Prissy-Tail some milk and takes two aspirins. Phil Donahue is talking to former dope addicts. Cleo turns off TV and finishes her coffee. She looks around at all the extra objects which have accumulated. A tennis racket. Orange-and-blue striped shoes. Blue jeans in heaps like rag dolls. Tammy's pictures scattered around on the divan and end tables. A collapsible plaid suitcase. Tote bags with dirty clothes streaming out the tops. Davey's Star Wars toys and his red computer toy that resembles a Princess phone. Tammy's Minute-Maker camera. Cleo has forgotten how to move effortlessly through the clutter children make. She pours more coffee and looks at the mail. She looks at a mail-order catalog which specializes in household gadgets. She is impressed with the number of things you can buy to help you organize things, items such as plastic pockets for grocery coupons and accessory-chests for closets. She spends a long time then studying the luxurious compartments of a Winnebago in a magazine ad. She imagines traveling out West in it, doing her cooking in the tiny kitchen, but she can't think why she would be going out West by herself.

The cheerleaders' outfits are taking a week. Everything has to be done over. Cleo puts zippers in upside down, allows too much on seams, has to cut plackets out twice. The cheerleaders come over for a fitting and everything is the wrong size. Cleo tells the cheerleaders, "I'm just like a wiggleworm in hot ashes." In comparison to the overalls, the blouses are easy, but she has trouble with the interfacing.

"You don't charge enough," Linda tells her. "You should charge $25 apiece for those things."

"People here won't pay that much," says Cleo.

Linda is in and out. The kids visit Bob at home during the weekend. It is more peaceful, but it makes Cleo worry. She is almost glad when they return Sunday evening, carrying tote bags of clothes and playthings. Bob has taken them out for pizza every meal, and they turn up their noses at what she has on the table—fried channel cat and hush puppies. Linda doesn't eat either. She is going out with Shirley. Cleo gives Prissy-Tail more fish than she can eat.

"Smile, Grandma."

"Well, hurry up," Cleo says, her body poised as if about to take off and fly. "I can't hold like this all day."

"Just a minute." Tammy moves the camera around. It looks like the mask on a space suit. "Say cheese!"

Cleo holds her smile, which is growing half-hearted and strained. The camera clicks, and the flash bulb flares. Together, they watch the picture take shape. Like the dawn, it grows in intensity until finally Cleo's features appear. The Cleo in the picture stands there vacantly, like a scared cat.

"I look terrible," says Cleo.

"You look old, Grandma."

On the cheerleader outfits, Cleo is down to finger work. As she whips the facings, she imagines Bob alone in the big ranch house. What would a man do in a house like that by himself? Linda had left him late one night and brought Tammy and Davey over, right in the middle of the "Tonight" show (John Davidson was the guest host). The children were half asleep. Cleo imagines them groggy and senseless, one day hooked on dope. She is always thinking of the worst ways things will end up.

The cheerleader outfits are finished. There are some flaws, Cleo knows, where she has had to take out and put in again so many times, but she tells herself that only somebody who sews will notice them. She pulls out bright blue basting thread.

She does some wash, finishes this week's Family Circle and cuts out a hamburger casserole recipe she thinks the kids might like. Then she throws away the Family Circle and the old TV Guide. She carries out trash. Then she straightens up her sewing corner and sorts her threads. She collects Tammy's scattered pictures and puts them in a pile. As she tries to find a box they will fit in, she accidentally steps on the cat's tail. "Oh, I'm sorry!" she cries, shocked. Prissy-Tail hides under the couch. Cleo can't find a box the right size.

Later in the day the cheerleaders pick up their new outfits. As they try them on, Cleo spots bits of blue basting thread she has missed. Embarrassed, she pulls out the threads. She knows the cheerleaders will be at the ball game and someone will see blue basting thread sticking out.

When the cheerleaders leave, Cleo has a headache. She is surprised to realize how much young girls jump around, even when they aren't cheerleading. She doesn't understand why Tammy doesn't want to be a cheerleader.

Thinking she will go to the show if there is a decent one on, Cleo drives to the shopping center. There isn't. An invasion from outer space and Jane Fonda. Cleo parks and goes to the K-Mart. She waves at Linda, who is busy with a long line of people at her register. Cleo walks around the store and finds a picture album with plastic pockets for Tammy. She will pay for it with some of the money she collected from the cheerleaders. Davey will want something too, but she doesn't know what to buy that he will like. After rejecting all the toys she sees, she buys a striped turtleneck sweater which is on sale. The album and the sweater are roughly the same price. She doesn't see Linda when she goes through the check-out line.

Cleo sits in the parking lot of the shopping center for a long time and then she goes home and makes the hamburger recipe.

"You all go on about your cats like they was babies," says Linda. Linda is sanding a rocking chair, which is upside down on newspapers in the hall.

"They're a heap sight less trouble," says Cleo, who is dusting. Rita Jean has called to say Dexter is home from the hospital, but there isn't much hope.

"Stop fanning doors, Tammy," Linda says. "Grandma's got a present for you."

Cleo brings out the picture album and the sweater.

"Now I want you to keep all them pictures in this," she tells Tammy. "Here, squirt," she says to Davey. "Here's something else for me to pick up."

The children take the presents wordlessly, examining them. Tammy turns the pages and pokes her fingers into the picture pockets. Davey rips the plastic wrapper off the sweater and holds it up. "It fits!" he says.

Davey turns on the television and Tammy sits on the divan, turning the empty pages of the picture album.

"You didn't have to do that," says Linda to Cleo.

"I'm just keeping up with the times," Cleo says. "Spend, spend, spend."

"Nothing wrong with keeping up with the times," says Linda.

"I see you are. With all that old-timey stuff you're collecting. Explain that."

"Everybody's going back to old-timey stuff. Furniture like yours is out of style."

"Then maybe one day it'll be antique. If I live that long." Cleo pokes the dusting broom at the ceiling.

"We're getting on your nerves," says Linda. "We're going to be getting out before long."

"I hope you mean going back home where you belong. Not that I mean to kick you out. You know what I mean."

"We're going back home all right," Linda says. "This is the big night—I'm going to meet Bob at Ken-Lake. I'm going to have it out with him. I can't wait." She wipes the rocker with a rag and turns it right side up. "There, I think that's enough. What a job! If I could just find a twin to it. Tammy, turn that radio down; you're bothering Grandma."

Cleo has to sit down. She is out of breath. The broom falls to the floor as she sinks onto the divan. "I'm not sixteen any more," she says. "I give out too quick."

"Mama, there's not a thing wrong with you. You just don't do anything with yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"Look at you; you're still a young woman. You could go to school, make a nurse or something. That Mrs. Smith over yonder is 68 and flies an airplane. By herself too."

"I can see me doing that." Cleo clutches a needlepoint pillow. Tammy and Davey are arguing, sounding like wild Indians, but the racket is losing its definition around her. She finds it hard to pick out individual sounds. It is just a racket, something like a prolonged, steady snore—with lots of tuneful snorts and snuffles and puffs. Jake used to snore like that but she could always tug the covers or kick at him gently and he would stop. You cannot stop this kind of racket. It goes on and on.

"Rita Jean said I was in the prime of life," says Cleo.

"Rita Jean should talk. Look at her. She petted that cat to death, if you ask me. And I never heard anything so ridiculous as her not wanting to go out West when she had the chance! I'd be gone in a minute!"

"People can't just have everything they want, all the time," Cleo says.

"I'm not mad at you, Mama. But people don't have to do what they don't want to as much now as they used to."

"I should know that," Cleo says. "It's all over television. Everything you watch. You make me feel awful."

"I don't mean to. It's for your own good."

Prissy-Tail jumps up on the divan and Cleo grabs her. She squirms up onto Cleo's shoulder.

"You sure are lucky, Prissy-Tail, that you don't have to worry," Cleo says.

Linda pulls the rocker through the doorway into the living room. It scrapes the paint on the door facing.

Cleo is behind on supper. She is making a blackberry cobbler and she is confused about the timing. The children's favorite show comes on before supper is ready. They take their plates into the living room. "Mork and Mindy" is the one thing Tammy and Davey agree on. Cleo fills her plate and watches it with them. It isn't one of her regular stories, and it seems strange to her. Mork is from outer space and drinks through his finger. Otherwise, he is like a human being except for his non-stop wisecracks, which Cleo finds hard to follow. Also, he wears galluses and sleeps hanging upside down. Jake used to wear galluses, Cleo thinks suddenly. Mork lives with Mindy, and Cleo thinks it is awful for such a thing to be on a children's show, but Davey and Tammy seem to think nothing of it. Cleo is pleased that they eat the hamburger casserole without complaining. During the commercial she gets them large helpings of hot blackberry cobbler.

In the light she sees that Tammy is wearing blue eye shadow. "It makes you look holler-eyed," Cleo tells her, but Tammy shrugs.

When Tammy and Davey are asleep, Cleo gets out her family picture album. It has few pictures, compared to the way people take pictures nowadays, she thinks. The little black corners are coming loose, and some of the pictures are lying at crazy angles. She tries to put them back in place, knowing they won't stay. She looks through the pictures of her parents' wedding trip to Biloxi. Her parents look so young. Her mother looks like Linda in the picture. She is wearing a long baggy dress in style at the time. Cleo's father is a slim, dark-haired man in the picture. He is smiling. He always smiled. Cleo's parents are both dead. She turns the pages to her own honeymoon pictures. One, in which she and Jake look like children, was taken by a stranger in front of the Jefferson Davis monument. She looks carefully at Jake's face, realizing that the memory of the snapshots is more real than the memory of his actual face. As she turns the pages she sees herself and Jake get slightly older. A picture of Linda shows a stubborn child with bangs.

Cleo looks at a picture of Jake on the tractor. He is grinning into the sun. That was Jake when he was happy. He was a quiet man. Cleo studies a picture taken the year he died, and she wonders suddenly if Jake had ever cheated on her. He could have that time he went to the state fair, she thinks. When he returned he acted strangely, bringing back a red ribbon he had won, and talking in a peculiar way about the future of the family farm. Jake would never forgive her for selling the farm. It was surely her way of cheating on him, she thinks uncomfortably, but she never would have thought of divorcing him, just as she has not been able later to think of remarrying.

On the last pages of the album she sees a surprise, a picture she does not recognize at first. It is dim figures on a television screen. Then she remembers. Tammy took pictures of "Charlie's Angels" the night Linda missed it.

"Here, Mama, that's you." Tammy pointed to the dark-haired actress, whose face was no bigger than a pencil eraser and hard to make out.

"Just give me her money and I'll do without her looks," Linda replied.

Tammy has put this picture in Cleo's family album. Cleo cannot think why Tammy would do this. Then she sees on the next page that Tammy has also put in the picture she took of Cleo. The picture is the last one in the scrapbook. Again, Cleo sees herself, looking scared and old.

"The roof fell in," Cleo tells Rita Jean the next day. "Linda says she's not going back to Bob. She says she wants a separation and he's agreed to move out. Them children will be packed from pillar to post. I didn't sleep a wink all night last night."

Cleo is at Rita Jean's. Cleo has driven over, skipping the "Today" show and her morning phone conversation. Now she feels more comfortable at Rita Jean's than at home. The house is brightly decorated with hand-made objects. Rita belongs to a mail-order craft club which sends a kit every month. She has made a new latch-hook wall hanging of an Arizona sunset. Cleo admires it and says, as she gazes at a whip stitch, "What I don't understand is how my daughter can carry on like she does. She chirps like a bird! She comes in singing."

"I just don't know," says Rita Jean. "Don't look at this mess," she says as she leads Cleo to the back room where Dexter is sleeping in a box.

"The vet said there's not a thing wrong with him. He's just wearing out. He said keep him warm, have food for him whenever he wants it, and pet him and talk to him. It might be that I kept him in too long and he's just pined away. Do you think that was right, to keep him in like that all this time?"

"If you had let him out he would have just got run over," says Cleo. She strokes Dexter and he stirs slightly. His fur is dull and thin.

"I'll just have to accept it," says Rita Jean.

"Maybe it will be good for you," says Cleo, more harshly than she intends. "I've about decided there's no use trying to hang on to anything. You just lose it all in the end. You might as well just not care."

"Don't talk that way, Cleo."

"I must be getting old," laughs Cleo, but without humor. "I'm saying what I think more. Or younger, one. Old people and children—they always say what they think."

Over coffee, Cleo talks Rita Jean into going to trade day at the stockyard.

"Linda said we've got to get out, keep up with the times," Cleo says. "Just what I need—more junk. But it's the style."

"Maybe it will take our minds off of everything," says Rita Jean, getting her scarf, "but I don't see how."

Most of the traders at the stockyard are farmers who trade in second-hand goods on the side. Cleo is shocked to realize this, though she knows nobody can make a living on a farm these days. She recognizes some of the farmers, behind their folding tables of dusty, old objects. Even at the time of Jake's death, feeding the cows was costing almost as much as the milk brought. She cannot imagine Jake in a camper, peddling some old junk from the barn. That would kill him if the heart attack hadn't.

Cleo and Rita Jean drift from table to table, touching Depression glass, crystal goblets, cracked china, cast-off egg beaters and mixers, rusted farm implements, and greasy, wooden boxes stuffed with buttons and papers.

"I never saw so much old stuff," says Cleo.

"Look at this," says Rita Jean, pointing to a box of plastic jump ropes. "These aren't old."

They look at hand-tooled leather belts and billfolds, made by prisoners. And black velvet paintings of bright scenes—bullfights and skylines and sunsets. A man in a cowboy hat displays the paintings from a fancy camper called a Sports Coach.

"He must have come from far away," says Rita Jean.

"I used to have a set of these." Cleo holds a tiny crystal salt shaker, without the pepper. There is a syrup holder to match.

"You could spend all day here," says Rita Jean, looking around like a lost child.

Cleo doesn't hear her. All of a sudden her blood is rushing to her head and her stomach is churning. She is looking at a miniature Early American what-not, right in front of her. It is imitation mahogany. She holds it, touching it, turning it, amazed.

"If it had been a snake it would have bit me!" cries Cleo, astonished. But Rita Jean is intent on examining a set of enamel cannisters with cat decals on them and doesn't notice.

The what-not cannot be the same one. Cleo cannot remember what happened to the little what-not that sat on the dresser, the box in which Jake kept his stamps, his receipts, and his bank book.

This what-not has a door held in place by a wooden button, and on the top, like books on a shelf, is a series of tiny boxes, with sliding covers like match boxes. The little boxes have names: Book Plates, Mending Tape, Gummed Patches, Rubber Bands, Gummed Labels, Mailing Labels. There are pictures on the spines of the boxes, together forming a scene—an old-fashioned train running through a meadow past a river, with black smoke trailing across three of the boxes and meeting a distant mountain. A steamboat is in the background. The curved track extends from the first box to the last. The scene is faded green and yellow, and there are lacy ferns and a tree in the foreground. The boxes are a simple picture puzzle to put in order. Cleo's children played with the puzzle when they were small, but her grandchildren were never interested in it. It cannot be the very same what-not, she thinks.

"I'm going to buy this!" Cleo says.

"That's high," says Rita Jean, fingering the price sticker. The what-not is $3.00.

Cleo looks at the train. Two of the pictures are out of order, and she rearranges them so that the caboose is at the end. For a moment she can see the train gliding silently through the pleasant scene, as quietly as someone dreaming, and she can imagine her family aboard the train as it crosses a fertile valley—like the place down by the creek that Jake loved—on its way out West. On the train her well-behaved sons and their children are looking out the windows, and Linda and Bob are driving the train, guiding the cow-catcher down the track, while Tammy and Davey patiently count telephone poles and watch the passing scenery. Cleo is following unafraid in the caboose, as the train passes through the golden meadow and they all wave at the future and smile perfect smiles. □

ROGER MITCHELL

ALL HALLOW'S EVE

and the wind
out walking, out
looking for a bush
to thrash,
out walking all night long
along gutters,
kicking leaves back
across raked grass,
flinging some rain down
hard.

Thirteen years ago,
in a graveyard outside Cracow,
every tombstone soaked
at dusk
in candle light,
the living moving there
in shrouds of flesh.

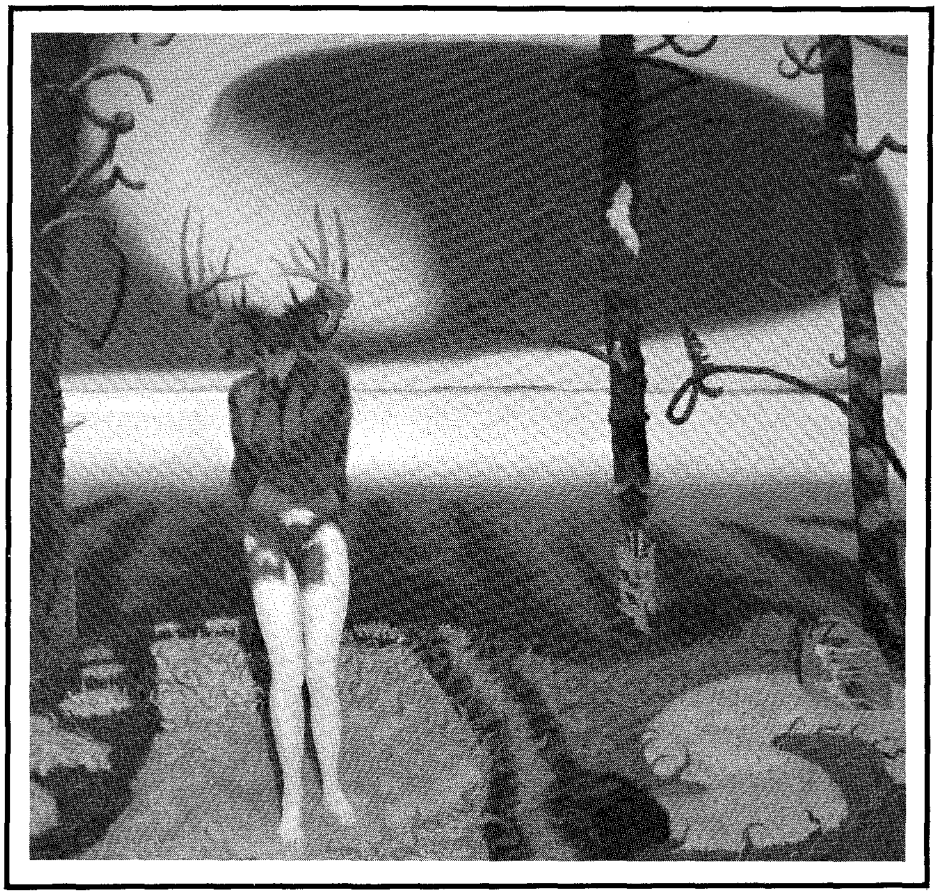
The children come
with scrawled faces,
pretending to be
what they are,
robber and tiger,
monster and cold blue star.
They thank me
for what they get
by threat,
then run ragged
into the dark.

To Mommy's waiting car
often, but often
on to the next
door bang and gripped soap,
hoping for one
genuine rejection,
somebody caught
thoughtless.

Deep in a year
undistinguished
and indistinguishable
from those
around it,
the wind continues
its nervous
rustle, its nosing

among rubbish
for something to lift.

I, who would cheerfully
be spirited
off,
were the wind to blow
in the right direction,
know that it wont
this year, but go
out anyway
into a neighborhood darkened
by fear and the weather,
where the only light
is the blot
of streetlight and pumpkin,
and throw myself
like a dishrag
into a sink
full of dirty dishes.
Damn it, I say
to the parked car.
And damn it,
I say to the bush.
And when the cloud
spits in my eye,
damn it, I say
again.



Notes from The Bloodwell

Thaisa Frank

Oct. 11

Our journey to the rockbed began fifty yards due south where softly-lit tunnel winds underground to the deepest point. As we burrowed along, we felt people inching along in back of us—and in front of my face were two large shoes. Up close, the thin, endolithious membrane was warm, palpable, deceptively opaque—an illusion created by the uneven thickness of the blood. As my eyes got used to the dark, I saw shifting layers of indigo, lavender and vermillion blood, floating like glass beneath the surface. My colleague and I lay on our backs and saw people at ground-level taking samples from the well: Aware that the well is a one-way mirror, they paused and waved—like tinted icons.

Oct. 13

Yesterday, our committee was shown slides of a man going quietly to the well at night when other campers in the forest were sleeping. We saw him lower a wooden bucket into the well and allow blood to pour over the laminated sides. He brought the bucket to his car, poured it on the ground, then sat near a cluster of laurel. Blood seeped into the furrows of his corduroy pants, small half-moon crusts formed on his shoes. And we liked imagining the smell of pine, how quiet it must have been.

copyright ©1981 by Thaisa Frank

Oct. 14

"The grandmother sitting on her blue-and-white kitchen floor, blood hardening in the cracks, the young father at home alone with the blood. . . . All Americans developing their own approaches to the bloodwell. . . ."(source unknown)

Oct. 15

Found a scant half-hour in which I could experience the bloodwell alone. In the course of its cycle, noises rose and fell like waves, and the frail biconcave discs floating on the blue diffusing membranes seemed to make a soft, moaning noise. There was something lonely about this experience—like lying in the dark, listening to another body.

Oct. 18

The diurnal rhythm of this gelatinous, 24-foot ellipsoidal sphere remains a mystery as it sways over its hollow 16 feet below the earth. It heaves, sighs, sucks air into its permeable membrane, then reverses its undulation, leaving threads of dying tissue on the soil. The bloodwell is always changing: When we touch its streamers, it becomes an event. When we lean against its soft surface, it's a pillow. And, when we assemble to discuss it, it's a subject of anxiety—so at night, in the tents, there is restless joking. We tell the jokes in the dark and remember them, reluctantly, in the morning.

Oct. 21

Activity is constant in the damp tunnel beneath the well: Blueprints. Arguments. Debates. Then sudden departures. Silence.

Oct. 22

I find the activity exhausting.

Oct. 23

More slides—this time of children, lowering small plastic pails into the well. There were five children, and the delight on their faces was obvious. Each took a small amount of blood in the bucket and ran to the forest to deposit it on the ground. There was no sound-track, but we imagined their voices.

Oct. 25

Reports show that everybody who draws the blood feels a 'pervasive sense of peace,' forcing our committee to reconsider proposed restrictions.

Oct. 26

Every day, we struggle to explain it. There are those who think that the bloodwell is congealed bison blood from a glacial age, those who think that it's a stagnant pond. We have loud, bellowing explanations for the insane, unrevealed explanations for the dead. Today, a Canadian bio-physicist said flatly: "I suppose you're hoping that a confluence will be found—flowing beneath states, connecting Kansas and New York, Georgia and Oregon, Louisiana and Ohio. But what is an explanation but a cat's-cradle of selected facts? You people can't explain. You don't know *how* to explain. . . ."

Oct. 27

Today, the head of the committee brought me to his tent and showed me a collection of porous rocks: I think that I'm in love with him.

Nov. 1

Met the Canadian scientist while taking samples at the surface. "You Americans meet your parents nervously," he said "—just like weevils in the soil: and *that's* why you're hoping for a confluence."

Nov. 3

Can we pin down the elusive colors of the bloodwell? The forms behind them? Patches of blue fade before my eyes, only to surface in a tenuous response to light. Is the low-keyed blue on the left a reappearance of the deep purple clot I saw yesterday? or a new colloid?

Nov. 6

The head of the committee has traveled to North Dakota to retrieve the remainder of his rocks. Sometimes I think I'm fond of him: Then I call him in North Dakota, sharing my hopes, my doubts, my confusions. At these times my thoughts of him are large.

But at other times, my thoughts of him are small—like last night, when I intuited him by his bed, in Mrs. Muteberner's rooming house, looking out a window (at a dog), lying down (it was time to sleep), and dreaming (about a town)—my thoughts going into his dream of the North Dakota night.

Nov. 13

Five days of research on the clotting properties show that platelets increase at ground level—new evidence of differentiated activity. Some feel this makes a stronger case for the existence of a source, while others say it's simply a reaction to increased oxygen at the surface.

Nov. 15

The director of the committee has returned from Fork Falls, North Dakota, with fifteen orange-crates of rocks. Today in the tunnel, he grasped my hand and I pulled him towards me. As we embraced, he murmured: "*Was ist die Blutquelle?*"

Nov. 18

Yesterday, we saw slides of a young couple visiting the well at dusk. They walked cautiously to the well, and the woman lowered a bucket while the man looked on. As she raised the bucket and poured the blood to the ground, he sat near a cluster of laurel, demonstrating the width of something with his hands—as though she'd asked him "how deep is the earth?" and he had answered "this deep!" But as the blood seeped into his clothes, he became quiet, and soon both were leaning against the tree, holding hands.

Nov. 19

The head of the committee left again for a brief lecture tour. I remember his warm hands, his cool face, the rancid smell of the bus terminal. . . . And I hurried back to the state forest, not bothering to stop in town.

Nov. 21

Today, when we were shown pictures of a group of people at the bottom of the well, raising paper cups in a kind of toast, we found to our surprise it was ourselves. Although nobody could remember the occasion, close-ups revealed fatigue, a day in mid-fall. Work characterizes the life here: There is talk of remodelling the well into a windmill, and the issue of rationing will come up in the near future. But all of us agree that a close relationship to the blood remains central. To use the well, many of us still struggle to overcome an aversion to the pungent smell, and the sight of our faces reflected in the dark liquid—like the moon on a bright night. ☐

THAISA FRANK is a writer and psychotherapist living in Oakland, and has taught at Berkeley and St. Mary's The story here is one version from a collection published by Kelsey Street Press.

PETER WILD

TREES

Often he is bothered by the cleverness of referents,
the cowboy caught eyeing the rancher's flat-chested
                              daughter playing the piano,
then building things with his pancakes,
who likes to think he quit before being fired
and loading up his boney horse,
              sawbuck with a canvas thrown over it,
rides off with his bedroll, his little dog
       named "Frisky" tied behind the saddle

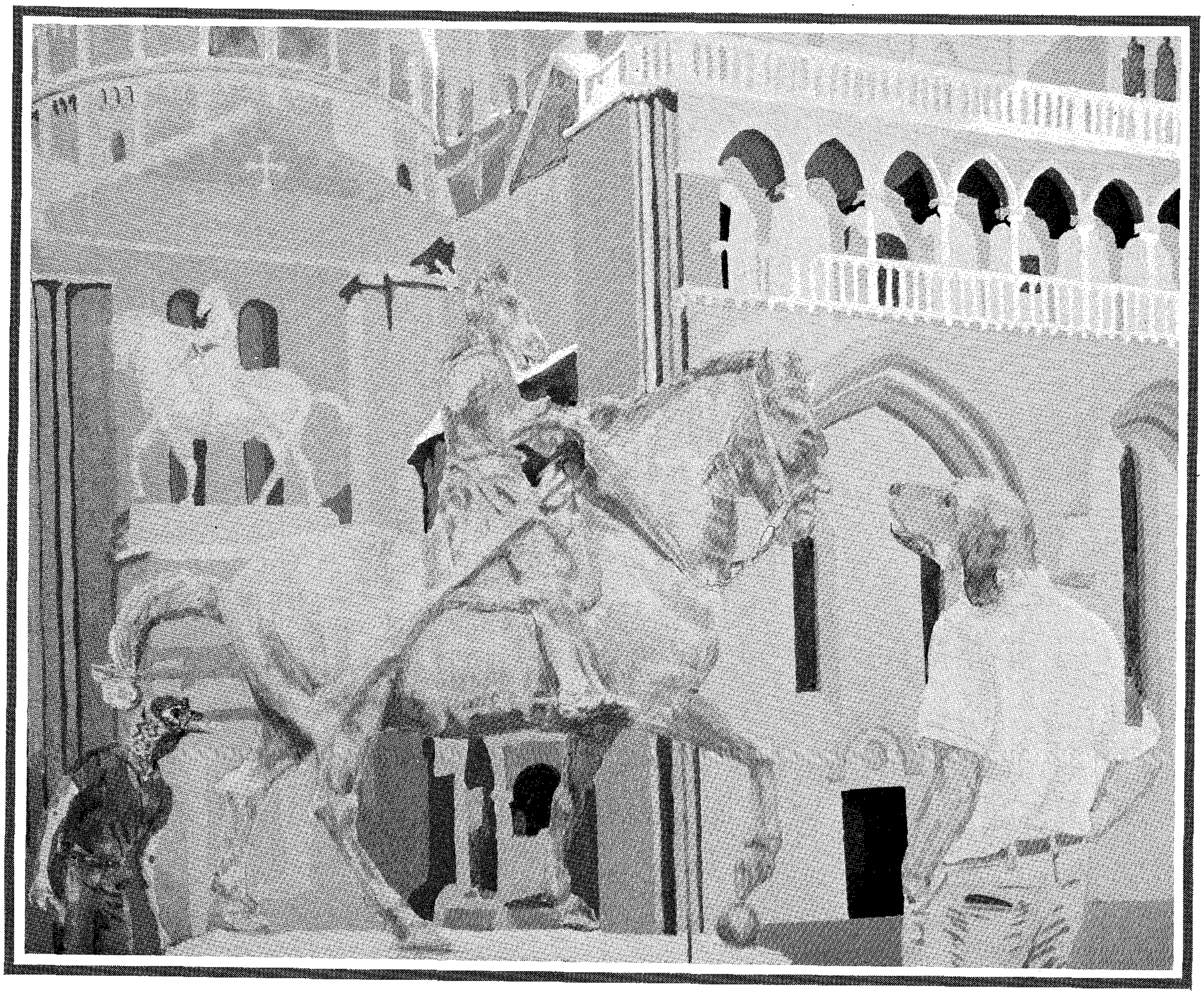
with a sigh, a chill that lasts all week long
                         into the bromide of the badlands.
there now and then they yap
                  at a rare bird flying over
with the face of a saint or a terrier,
point at the outline of a fish
      in a dry bank dribbling its teeth behind,
   a beggar once rich
          losing his money through a hole in his pocket,

or in the midst of all that sweat and silence
          go ooh and ahh over a trove
        of petrified wood, wet and sparkling
      in a wound of the earth, almost fill their saddlebags
   with the ancient forest. but jobs
may be had anywhere, and coming out on the other side

he passes up the aguish ranches, instead in town
        sells his clothes, sets up shop,
      becomes a puppeteer, a jeweler squinting
                     over what he has found, flattering women,
remembering at last that his ancestors were druids
          organizes the first raving symphony orchestra.

GEORGE CHAMBERS

MARCH 11



My wife asked me to write a story. The buzzer on the alarm clock had just gone off and she reached out of the covers to stop it. We were folded together, quite cozy. New light on the white plaster walls. Outside we could hear a cardinal singing, the duck-like honk of the nuthatch also. We listened. At 6:15 she tapped my shoulder.

"Write a story today," she said.

"What about?" I asked.

"Oh," she said, "about, about a husband and wife."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"How long a story?"

"Seven, ahh eight pages," she said and began to slip out of the bed. I put my hand on her bottom to guide her out, to assist.

"Don't shove like that," she said.

I corrected her, I told her I was helping. She left the bedroom and returned shortly, wearing her bathrobe, the big furry brown one that makes her look so huge, so bearlike.

"I put on water for your coffee," she said. "Will you get up?"

I shoved my body around, took advantage of the whole bed. The light was, how shall I say it?, *expanding* the room. *Husband* and *wife* I heard. Outside a titmouse was at it, belting out his song. What else have I been trying to do, for some months now, but to write a story? But each attempt succeeds less, no matter what confirmation the "world" provides. These days I can hardly get a page into a story before I feel, what is it, loss?, yes, *loss*: and also, *lie*. So I come back to records, statistics, weather reports. There, there. *Here*. It is a lovely day a-dawning. It is cold, bright and cold. But you can see the warmth in that light, in the zip and tumble of the birds outside. I was wondering if the raccoon we saw before we went to bed last night came back later and ate the sourdough bread my wife put out for him in the aluminum pan.

I got out of bed and dressed. I went into the bathroom to use the toilet. My wife was in the tub, her pink body sunk in Mediterranean blue. The black kitten sat on the edge of the tub, scrutinizing the operation, bemused by the fact of water: how it is there and then not there. I walked into the kitchen and poured the boiling water into the cup, *instant* coffee. My wife had let the dogs out and they were at the back door, wiggling in the cold, hungry. I let them in and fed them. I took a sip of coffee. I thought about the cedar waxwings I saw yesterday and wondered if I would see them again today. My wife told me about them, how they flock about and how sometimes they will take a berry and pass it among them back and forth until one decides to eat it. But story, *story,* I heard. What do I have to tell, what truth, what experience? What I know is my distrust for what I have done, what story I have attempted. I think the reason is some radical distrust of whatever materials I bring to the story. *Write a story.*

One afternoon when Betty got home from work she told Bob that she was getting worried, that if she had just one more whisky she might, well, just *crack,* she said. And there I would stop, not trusting that invention you see. *Betty and Bob.* You see.

A better story would be very close to some record of the day. For example, I was in town on Saturday to return some books and records to the library and to retrieve a pair of binoculars that were being repaired. It was a chilly, windy day and I was feeling very shaky. So I asked my wife to hold my arm as we walked along. Now that seems like important material, to me. Further, I would like to discuss or at least accurately describe the trouble I am having with *space* and *time* lately. It seems relevant to present them. I feel, thinking of space, that I am going to fall into it. Walking along, through the parking lot, I think I may fall. Or why on earth is it 2 o'clock? What earthly reason is there for it being that time? But these, you see, are hardly the materials that make a story.

So I took my coffee (that is also a problem, the possessive pronouns . . . I find I am correcting myself a lot lately, crossing out the possessive pronouns: is it my coffee my wife my dog my house my car my life? No, it seems inaccurate to say so.) and sat down in a chair to read a story that a friend had sent me, a *story* story about fifth grade kids at a parochial school rehearsing their sins before Saturday confession. It was a lovely story, but a story. I loved it but I didn't trust it. My wife leaned in and kissed me goodbye. I was worried that I didn't take the pipe out of my mouth as our lips met. I thought, as she leaned out, that I should have taken the pipe out, that a kiss should never be casual.

I did love the story, however. I went to the typewriter and wrote of my enthusiasm to my friend. Did I *love* the story? Perhaps I lied there. I am trying not to lie these days. I used to sign my letters with that word but lately I have stopped that. Now when I end a letter I just sign my name. No, that's not true. I just wrote my brother and I used that word.

I wrote my friend and I read here and there in several books, and then I did some exercises to the *Phil Donahue* show on the television. It concerned the problem of fat on American women. When it was over at 10 o'clock I got up and began this story. I rolled the paper in the typewriter and typed my name upper right. That somehow signified an intent, that what I was about was a story. Beneath it to the left I typed: MARCH 11, which is the date today. Now it is 10:40. I am on page four of my story. I just opened a package of gum and now I am chewing all five pieces. So far this story is accurate to the experience of this day, more or less. I have left out a fast breakfast of cottage cheese and grapefruit. I have left out certain private matters which have crossed my mind, a few worries I have which I shall leave unrecorded. At least for now. I may circle back to them. While I was watching the Donahue show I saw the silhouette (I stopped to check the spelling of that in the dictionary) of a cedar waxwing. I found the binoculars and trained it on the bird. Sure enough: a cedar waxwing, warming itself in the rays of the morning light.

I'm going to stop for a while now. I want to read this over and I want to check the seed trays on the back porch. I'll be right back. It's 10:44.

There is plenty of seed in the feeders, nothing outside with which I am unfamiliar: a crowcall deep in the woods, chickadees here and there, squalling. Way up, the vapor trail of a jet. I take my binoculars to it and they reveal a four-engine bomber. I hear a train horn in the valley below. I stare into the blank woods. It is bright and cold. Then I came inside (yes I noticed the shift of the tense

---

GEORGE CHAMBERS teaches at Bradley. His most recent story collection is ∅ Null Set *(Fiction Collective).*

above) and read this story so far. It is dull and largely accurate. Rising from the chair to resume this typing it occurs to me that what I have written, for all its presumed truth-telling, is no more interesting and no more trustworthy than the greatest of fish stories. Perhaps I think it is even less so, in some way I as yet do not understand.

Husband and wife. (Switch on the FM Radio—a divertimento by Mozart.) (The cat, not the kitten, is howling in the kitchen. I feed her.) What I would like to record is something about us, *this* husband, *this* wife. (Oopps! A great ladder-backed woodpecker is backing down the hackberry toward the feeder! He's at it now, a very cautious bird. Gone.) I'd like to record the precise quality of our happiness, the exact nature of what we share and what we don't share. I'd like to present some of our more outstanding arguments. I would like to discuss *her*: her capacity for joy, her way with this world. Last night, for example. When the raccoon strolled by the patio glass door and stopped to look in on us as we watched the television. How it stared at the kitten, and how frozen the kitten was to see so large, so awesome a being, a masked bandit, two feet from her nose! I would like a reader to understand the absolute joy of my wife watching that raccoon eat the sugar-coated baked chicken she had set out for him, the lovely exhalations of breath that came from her as she exclaimed its precise movements. How its paws carefully turned each piece of chicken about, how slowly it chewed, how it looked up into our faces from time to time. Her joy: the best, very best thing ever to happen has happened, that animal feeding on the patio, searching finally through the pan of sourdough bread for another piece of chicken. (I stopped to light a pipe. The one-legged chickadee is balancing on the edge of the window-feeder, checking the seed with its keen eyes. There better be some sunflower seed there or I'll catch hell, there will be hell to pay.) (I took the cat out to her chain on the patio.) Her joy, the absolute joy, the superior joy. She could watch that animal forever, she could play with her kitten forever.

It is now 11:22. I am going to walk a letter to Mastercharge to the mailbox. It is a letter of complaint of long-standing, concerning a mis-billing.

What I perceive now is an urge to lie, to paint this up a bit, to provide some allure, to hint at some *dark theme* to keep you attendant. (Clapping on the radio, the divertimento is concluded.) To move perhaps beyond the peculiar adornment of the story and into the dark stones of crushingly bitter truths that foundate this life. To move into some more naked form, something *faster.* (More clapping.) I asked my wife this morning something, I forgot to tell you. After the alarm sounded I heard a patriotic song and had some of its words on my tongue. I forget it now except that its lines were very busy, very clotted. Oh yes, here it is:

> He hath trampled out the vineyards where the grapes of wrath are stored.
> He hath loosed his faithful lightning with his terrible swift sword.

Yes. She, my wife, remembered some of the second verse and spoke it for me. It was then that I assisted her from the bed. I used that word, *assisted*, to provide some pleasure for my readers, to indicate in that way precisely the nature of my action.

Here I am already on page seven. I think I'll stop this now and hope that my wife will read it over after lunch, if she has the time. Perhaps she will suggest where it might go next, what germs lie here that could be fecundated. Now I shall rest a bit. I type standing up and after a while my feet go to sleep and my shoulders get sore. *The* shoulders, I should say.

So far, the wife likes it. She read it after her lunch.

"I do like it, it's a good story," she said.

"I wonder what will happen next," I said.

"You'll probably be drunk by the time I get home," she said.

I held the kitten up to the window so she could see the birds. She watched intently, sighed a few times.

"See ya later," she said.

"Bye," I said.

It is now precisely 1 P.M. I am going to take a break now and walk around the cornfield with my two dogs Tookie and Charlie. We'll be back a bit after 2 P.M. I'll make a cup of coffee and continue with this. The first thing I'll do is tell you about the mail I received today. For now, then. (May I suggest that you also take a little break, a walk, a bit of coffee perhaps, before you return to these words?)

2:30. Some walk. We were much impeded, as are all spring offensives, by heavy muddd. We returned, Tookie, Charlie, and myself, at 2:15. I heated water for coffee and cleaned my field boots. As we began the walk I considered this story so far, but very soon I was immersed in the walk itself, the path the mud the wood the occasional cry of a bird. It did occur to me that I have less trouble with the space in nature, perhaps less trouble with time then also. It also occurred to me to tell you that what I distrust in most stories is rhyme. Yes. That is, (here we are already on the last page, according to the dictum of my wife!) I distrust the means most of us use to make things cohere, and thereby to lend what is presumably some *significance* to the tale. Any repetition, for example. For example, on the news this noon we heard the story of the Doctor who wrote *The Scarsdale Diet,* how he was shot to death today. Now if I mentioned that in this story a reader might presume that I was connecting that with the theme of the *Phil Donahue* show that I have recorded earlier in this story. You see the relation, no doubt.

Well, here it is, 2:39. I want to tell the truth. I do not wish to repeat the lies of yesterday. I want every word, every gesture, here, to be trustworthy. In the past you may have trusted my stories about the pains of human relationships. But they were lies, I think. I don't hate women, not at all. I love women. Also, I am afraid of women. I have hitherto covered that fact with the face of hatred. Also, it occurred to me that women are often attracted to such men, perhaps sensing their mask. I don't know. But I pretended to hate women as a means of seduction. And, may I say, it largely worked. So, in losing that fear, I lose that theme. Likewise for much else that has constituted my life (I am 48) to date. In the past I could rely on several habits to serve my fictional needs . . . mostly despicable to be sure, but the very stuff, the absolute mud, of fiction. But that also has dried and fallen off my boots. And so here I am, naked before you on the path, the slippery track, of this wife-begotten story. What I have left is a secret happiness I dare not present to you, a mild persistent longing for the old days of pain and sorrow. What I most fear now is that I am numb, that years of steady happiness have closed my heart. Yes.

Betty told Bob she was afraid she might *crack* if she continued to drink; that whisky was leaching all meaning from her life. Bob was in the kitchen having a drink; it was not his first. He stumbled toward her.

"Poor, poor, Bet," he said, hugging her.

She shoved him back.

"You drunk," she said, registering disgust.

"We'll stop tonight," he said, watching her closely.

She took off her winter coat.

"Make me one," she said. "I'm going to change clothes."

Bob went back to the kitchen where he was peeling potatoes. He finished that job and then prepared a whisky for Betty.

"How many ounces?" he asked, loud.

Hearing no reply, he measured three ounces of whisky into a glass, added three cubes of ice and filled it with water from the tap. His own drink was getting low, so he made himself another, nipping from the bottle as he prepared it. He was beginning to feel good. It was almost 5 o'clock. He was slowing down, into that time. He was hearing good sweet music from far off. He would have liked to dance with his wife but she would reject that. She would be tired and sullen, ready to *crack*. So she would just sip her drink and watch him, *for signs*, he thought.

"Here I am," Betty said, entering the kitchen in her bluest blue jeans, buttoning her bird-of-paradise shirt.

Bob looked at her, again stunned by her loveliness, this lovely, fragile woman, this nymph. Or was he angry with her, did he want to smash her, pick a fight, disturb the coolness of her waters, contribute to her *crack*?

"Where is it?" Betty asked.

Bob pointed to the counter where her drink was sweating.

Here I have not been faithful to the noon hour. I ate a ham sandwich with potato soup and a glass of water. When my wife came in she cooked bacon for a bacon and peanut butter sandwich. She drank milk. The kitten jumped on the table to watch her eat. She gave the kitten a few sips of milk from her glass. My wife told me about the girl at work whose production she had evaluated. She told the girl that as a result of a review of her record it was clear that she was not producing for the company. The girl broke down, in tears. This angered my wife. She suggested that the girl go home. The girl said she was pregnant, that she was exhausted all the time, that she had ridden to work with others and thus could not leave work. My wife told her that she would find her a ride home. It angers my wife that people are so unprofessional. When she left for work she said something like Well here I go back to another weepy again. Those were not her words, but that was her scorn. (I might say here, in defense of my wife against those who detect some coldness in her, that my sweet wife is all tenderness, all tears. But that they are flowing inside. Last summer, for example, when we were burying our beloved cat Jack who had been run down by a car on the highway, we were placing stones on his battered body in the grave I had dug for him in the back yard, heavy stones so that some scavenging beast would not, smelling him, dig his body up, and with each stone my hot tears sputted out, I was just loose with grief, but my wife was not crying outside, no, she was just plain white. She keeps her grief to herself.)

As she ate, I read the mail. Just one piece of any importance. A letter from my dear brother, in some trouble with his body. Some temporary good news. A letter from an insurance company. A circular from a store announcing *Hardware Week*.

Then my wife had to rush back to work. She did read the story, as I have reported. She smiled, she liked it. I asked her what was going to happen next in the tale and she said I'd probably be drunk by the time she returned. Then I stopped writing and went for a muddy walk.

Husband and wife. How about a pair of woodpeckers at the suet cage? In the waning light, hacking away? It is now 3:44. I am very tired now, my feet feel swollen. The Mozart Hafner Symphony is on the radio. There's a *phony* in "symphony." All the animals in this house are snoozing: the cats upstairs on our bed, the dogs under their favorite chairs in the living room.

Betty took the slippery glass and raised it to her mouth.

"Whose turn to cook?" she asked.

Bob stepped toward her. He pointed at his nose with his index finger.

"Yours," he said, "but as you can see, as any goddamned fool can see, I have started it."

Betty turned back and wandered off into the living room where she switched on the light and began to read her seed catalogs. Bob was thinking of the thundering, crashing last movements of Beethoven. If only he had a huge stereo to blast the ice out of his life. He took up one of the potatoes he had peeled and carried it to the door of the living room.

"Hey," he said, to get her attention. Betty did not look up. Their black kitten had crawled into her lap. Bob tossed the potato in a high arc toward her. He should have fast-balled it, he thought, as the potato missed its mark and bumped to a stop on the rug. Bob looked at his wet hand. What he needed was not another drink. He retraced his steps to the kitchen to find the bottle.

A husband/wife story, she said. That is to be my project for today. Another thing I don't trust in stories, I have mentioned the way, the trick, of most stories, the rhyming to convey the illusion of coherence (when you know as well as I that nothing coheres), is the sex-theme. It, I take it, is yet another means to suggest value and truth in a story. But this is not so. What you will do, if you are honest, is realize that at the moment of sex in the story you forget the story itself otherwise. You are caught by the pure utilitarian pornography of it. It arouses you, specifically. That is why I can no longer write sex messages in my stories. So I am less. I am left with fewer possibilities to make a true story beyond records, statistics. But how long will you stand for me merely reporting the time, the weather, the conditions? It is very dull. More interesting would perhaps be for me to explore my problems with those two dimensions I mentioned before, sometime this morning. (It's almost 4 o'clock. I'll probably make myself a drink at 4 o'clock.) *Space.* I think enclosed space is the problem. Or man-made space. Parking lots, for example. Grocery stores. I feel out of focus in space, too large. Waiting in the check-out line I will wonder what I am doing in that line. I will feel as if I don't belong. In the parking lot, walking along with a grocery bag full of food, I will think I might fall, that I might drop it. *Time.* I don't see how it can pass, how it can be later. How now it is almost 4 o'clock and yet this morning it was 6 o'clock. When I get back to the house with the grocery bag I will feel almost something akin to *fear* at the passage of time, fear that time is apparent to me, so *present*, and that I don't understand it. (The cat is howling to be let out. I let her out.)

The bottle was empty. Bob went to the liquor cabinet and took out a bottle of Yukon Jack, the spirit that got many a man through a lonely night. He carried it into the kitchen, cracked the seal, unscrewed the cap, and took a sip. It was very thick, sweet. He poured some over the ice-cubes in his glass. He looked out the window, the waning light of the day, the dark fields spotted here and there with snow. As he sipped he cut the potatoes and put them in boiling water on the stove. The radio was playing music. He went into the dining room and shut it off. His wife liked silence. She wanted it quiet. The stillness of disaster, the quiet that precedes all great disasters. The kitten strolled toward him, casually reached up his leg and used it as a scratching post. When she finished he opened the refrigerator and studied its contents of left-overs. Mashed potatoes and what else? Something to attend the loneliness of men in their huts on long winter nights. Meatloaf, baked chicken, fish sticks? The water boiled up again and he turned the gas down and covered the pot.

It is just after 4 o'clock now. I'm going to stop the record and make myself a whisky. When I return I'd like to discuss marriage with you. I would like to discuss freedom and joy. And a certain persistent need to lie. Also, I'll try to think of something for us to eat tonight. My wife will be tired. I'll think of something simple.

Well, I am back. I must say I am tired of being bound to report to you the mere passage of time. What sense does it make to tell you that it is *later*, that the day is on the wane, that the lovely light on the fields is long, muted, that birds are preparing for night?

About husband and wife? Well, I can say here that I don't feel quite alive unless she is with me. That if she is gone my dominant sense is that of *waiting*. That increases my time-confusion, I am sure. I like my wife in the house. Even though I may not be otherwise with her, I do prefer her to be here. I want to tell the story of daily life, the nothing-specialness which is after all the life experience of most of us most of the time. A story about the silent meals, the slow passage of the hours. The sound of quiet, the chewing, the little peeps of the birds as they feed. The practical discussions of daily life, the preparation of shopping lists. The dominant daily questions: what shall we eat tonight, did you get the film, where is the broom? Bob took out the meatloaf and shut the refrigerator door. He put it in an aluminum tray and turned the oven dial to 400 degrees. Perhaps when my wife comes home she will read this so far and suggest where it might go next, what gesture it might make, what turn. I myself am feeling a need for some surprise, of writing something I can't quite know, a modest little probe into something wonderful, some wonderful acknowledgement that will seem to arise naturally out of the materials here recorded. But what that might be I cannot imagine. I see life continue, going on its muddy track of days without special meaning, without great significance or change or understanding. I wonder if I would trust something other than the predictable repetition of ordinary events. I would resist. I could not accept. I want to inhabit fully the memory of my life and I want that to be the story. The full inhabitation of the moment that my wife is capable of; that complete entry into the skin of the raccoon as it chews her baked chicken. In that dimension there would be no space, no time.

I am 48, as I said. Ahead of me, the time is infinite, x number of years. I would like to live those years yet to be. What I am trying to do is prepare myself for those years. To cast off the useless past of habit and memory. To be done with judgment, with comparison, with loss. With lie. And to find or discover or invent the means to make a trustworthy coherence of this experience, experience which now rages in its particularity. Bob looked at his watch. He decided that he would be able to serve the meatloaf and potatoes in 45 minutes, just before 6 o'clock. There would be time to offer Betty another drink. If she is going to crack it might just as well come now although it won't. He wished that she would come into the kitchen. He wished that she would hug him, tell him that everything was going to be fine. He placed the rubber stopper in the sink drain and let the hot water run. He would need to do a few dishes before supper. Plates, silverware, wine glasses. He poured liquid soap into the rising water. There is no end to record-keeping. It is not the answer. The answer is to become the bird, to lift off the trunk of the hackberry on great wings and swoop into the dark woods and sit on a stone, to inhabit being, *to come inside.* Record-keeping is lies. Like weather forecasts. How many years have I listened to weather reports and what has been the difference? Statistics are a form of *prevention.*

The whisky is good. I have before me one big drink of 101 proof bottled-in-bond *Wild Turkey.* As the time of my wife's predicted return grows shorter the time passes more slowly, the sense of waiting increases almost *painfully*. She will be here in less than 30 minutes. The dogs will hear her car before I do and rush to the door wiggling. Then I will hear the garage door opening.

I need, you see, to find the faith to continue. I am, as you can tell, at some defined *end.* I am not *through* yet, but the end is where I am now. At least I hope so. What I fear is more years of the same. What I fear is that my life such as it is is simply *over,* that I am not at the *end,* that I am not in transit *through,* that some *toward* is not before me. But I will have the care to monitor this, to proceed? I don't think I can . . . .

GERALD COSTANZO

JEANE DIXON'S AMERICA

San Francisco remains in grave personal
danger. Dubuque continues to be a source
of consternation for the entire Hawkeye
state. Tensions could diminish, though only
through an act of subterfuge.

New Jersey will be named in a paternity
suit, but will wage battle in open
court to preserve its good name.
Look for Minneapolis and St. Paul
to split, this time for good. Each
will agree they were never meant
to be together.

New York City will embark on a religious
pilgrimage, either to Rome or Jerusalem.
But there can be no forgiveness.
Overnight stardom is putting a great deal
of pressure on Missoula, Montana, which will
have to choose its roles carefully
in the coming months or risk
being a ghost town by the end of the decade.

Peoria must keep itself from overexposure
once again this year. If it succeeds, its
many problems will continue to go unnoticed.
Honolulu, weary of the long commute,
longs to be part of the mainland,
especially of southern California.
But with things the way they are now,
don't look for this to happen any time
soon.

The whisky is very good, the sun is bending itself out. I'll have to think of something for supper, perhaps meatloaf. Or perhaps I could make a quick tuna casserole. How big the feet of the junco are. They look like bamboo rakes. Which is how they use them, they literally *rake* the ground with their feet until they spot something edible. I'll hear the automatic garage door grind open and my wife's car will enter it. Then she will walk around the side of the house and enter through the sliding glass door in the living room. The dogs will greet her, the kitten will stroll in also. I will maintain my position in the kitchen. As the day continues I lose some of the faith and hope with which I arise each morning. I decline with the light. *Wild Turkey*, not quite sure why. I am not a wild turkey. If I were to name a whisky it would be *Sundown*. Well, in a marriage like ours, it is the wife who makes things cohere. My mode is downward, destructive. She deflects that drift somehow. . . keeps it off course, I think one could say. This isn't much of a story so far. Although my wife liked it to page 10 or so, I think she may be disappointed by the turns it is so obviously not taking. I think she might like to bring the couple together, to have them play with each other perhaps. Well, in any case she will read it, and she will probably find something good to say. When she heard the sink filling with water Betty came into the kitchen, the kitten patrolling behind her. She carried a catalog called "Roses '80." Bob watched her carefully as she approached.

"Lookie here," she said, holding the catalog up to Bob's face.

"What?" he said.

Betty opened the catalog.

"It smells," Bob said.

"They scented it," Betty said. "Lookie."

"At what?" Bob asked. "I see roses."

"Read the names," Betty directed.

"Love," Bob read. "Honor and cherish."

Betty looked at Bob, awaiting something.

"Well?" she asked.

"Well *what*?" said Bob.

"Well give me another drink if you don't know," she said. The black kitten curled itself between Betty's legs, looked up at her. Bob put down his dishrag. As he prepared her drink he ran through the left-overs and asked her what she thought she wanted.

"Which do you want?" Betty asked.

"Oh I don't care," Bob said, "meatloaf I guess."

"I mean roses, *roses*," Betty underlined, her tone angrier than Bob's mistake.

"Why don't you just get them all," Bob said quietly. "It doesn't matter."

He handed Betty another drink and told her to go back to the livingroom, that he would decide supper and serve it in there so they could watch the television.

"I know which rose you want, Roberto," she said, sipping her whisky.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Guess," she said.

"Oh, I don't know. I'd say buy all three, they all look nice."

"Roberto, you are not listening, did you *hear* me?"

This *through* I hope I am in, oh some months now. Sometimes I feel a glimmer of change, of a new coherence. But as the day wears on I lose the confidence of this time. I don't know. The dogs are barking and wiggling, my wife is entering the driveway, in a few seconds I will hear the garage door. She will come in, she will say *I'm home* and the life of the husband and wife will resume, their story will pick up speed. Close to this end of the story I want to deliver some truths, some instruction. It has been an ordinary day, a late winter March in the mid-west. Nothing special has happened, no more or less than occurs on most days. A simple day. I suspect that the form of this piece may suggest a conclusion to you and I must say that I had thought of that also—after the fact, however. And so, risking your displeasure, I will not suddenly write it. My name is not Bob nor is my wife's name Betty. It could not be so, it would be a lie of old magnitude, a form which I no longer permit. The dogs are at the sliding door. It is sliding open.

"Hi, I'm home," says my wife.

"Hi," I say, and walk to greet her.

She looks at me. "You finish it?" she asks.

"More or less," I say and help her off with her coat. ☐

Cloud Crossings

Clouds are temporary creatures. So is the Milky Way, for that matter, if you take the long entropic view of things. I awake on a Saturday in mid-October with the ache of nightmares in my brain, as if I have strained a muscle in my head. Just a week before I turn thirty-three, just a month before my son turns one, I do not need physics or nightmares to remind me that we also are temporary creatures.

Baby Jesse is changing cloud-fast before my eyes. His perky voice begins pinning labels on dogs and bathtubs and sun. When I say, "Want to go for a walk?" on this morning that began with nightmares of entropy, he does not crawl towards me as he would have done only a few days ago. He tugs himself upright with the help of a chair, then staggers toward me like a refugee crossing the border, arms outstretched, crowing, "Wa! Wa!"

So I pack baby and water and graham crackers into the car, and drive thirty miles southeast of Eugene, Oregon, to a trailhead on Hardesty Mountain. There are several hiking paths to the top, ranging in length from one mile to six. I choose the shortest, because I will be carrying Jesse's twenty-two pounds on my back. I have not come here to labor, to be reminded of my hustling heart. I have come to watch clouds.

Markers on the logging road tell us when we drive up past 2500 feet, then 2750, 3000. Around 3250 the Fiat noses through the first vapors, great wrinkled slabs of clouds that thicken on the windshield. In the back seat Jesse strains against his safety-harness, his hands fisted on the window, hungry to get out there into that white stuff. I drive the last few hundred yards to the trailhead with lights on, in case we meet a car groping its way down the mountain.

Beside a wooden sign carved to announce HARDESTY MOUNTAIN TRAIL, I park the Fiat with its muzzle downhill, so we can coast back to the highway after our walk in case the weary machine refuses to start. I lean the backpack against the bumper and guide Jesse's excited feet through the leg-holes, one of his calves in each of my hands. "Wa! Wa!" he cries, and almost tips the pack over into the sorrel dust of the logging road. Shouldering the pack requires acrobatic balancing, to keep him from tumbling out while I snake my arms through the straps. Once safely aloft, assured of a ride, he jounces so hard in the seat that I stagger a few paces with the same drunken uncertainty he shows in his own walking.

Clouds embrace us. Far overhead, between the fretted crowns of the Douglas fir, I see hints of blue. Down here among the roots and matted needles, the air is mist. My beard soon grows damp, beads glisten on my eyelashes. A few yards along the trail a Forest Service board, with miniature roof to protect its messages, informs us we are at 3600 feet, and must hike to 4237 in order to reach the top of Hardesty. Since I came to see clouds, not to swim in them, I hope we are able to climb above them into that tantalizing blue.

On my back Jesse carries on a fierce indecipherable oration concerning the wonders of this ghostly forest. Giddy with being outside and aloft, he drums on my head, yanks fistfuls of my hair. Every trunk we pass tempts him more strongly than the apple tree could ever have tempted Eve and Adam. He lurches from side to side, outstretched fingers desperate to feel the bark. I pause at a mammoth stump to let him touch. Viewed up close, the bark looks like a contour map of the Badlands, an eroded landscape where you might expect to uncover fossils. While Jesse traces the awesome ridges and fissures, I squint to read another Forest Service sign. No motorized vehicles, it warns, and no pack animals.

I surely qualify as a pack animal. For long spells in my adult life, while moving house or humping rucksacks onto trains or hauling firewood, I have felt more like a donkey than anything else. I have felt most like a beast of burden when hauling my two children, first Eva and now Jesse. My neck and shoulders never forget their weight from one portage to another. And I realize that carrying Jesse up the mountain to see clouds is a penance as well as a pleasure—penance for the hours I have sat glaring at my typewriter while he scrabbled mewing outside my door, penance for the thousands of things my wife has not been able to do on account of my word mania, penance for all the countless times I have told daughter Eva no, I can't, I am writing. I know the rangers did not have human beasts in mind when they posted their sign, yet I am content to be a pack animal, saddled with my crowing son.

As I resume walking, I feel a tug. Jesse snaps a chunk of bark from the stump and carries it with him, to examine at leisure. Beneath one of the rare cottonwoods I pick up a leathery golden leaf, which I hand over my shoulder to the baby, who clutches it by the stem and turns it slowly around, ticking his nose with the starpoints. The leaf is a wonder to him, and therefore also to me. Everything he notices, every pebble, every layered slab of bark, is renewed for me. Once I carried Eva outside, in the first spring of her life, and a gust of wind caught her full in the face. She blinked, and then gazed at the invisible breath as if it were a flight of angels streaming past. Holding her in the crook of my arm that day, I rediscovered wind.

Fascinated by his leaf, Jesse snuggles down in the pack and rides quietly. My heart begins to dance faster as the trail zigzags up the mountain through a series of switchbacks. Autumn has been dry in Oregon, so the dirt underfoot is powdery. Someone has been along here inspecting mushrooms. The discarded ones litter the trail like blackening pancakes. Except for the path, worn raw by deer and hikers, the floor of the woods is covered with moss. Fallen wood is soon hidden by the creeping emerald carpet, the land burying its own dead. Limegreen moss clings fuzzily to the upright trunks, and dangles in fluffy hanks from limbs, like freshly-dyed wool hung out to dry. A wad of it caught in the fist squeezes down to nothing.

A lurch from the backpack tells me that Jesse has spied some new temptation in the forest. Craning around, I see his spidery little hands reaching for the sky. Then I also look up, and notice the shafts of light slanting down through the treetops. The light seems substantial, as if made of glass, like the rays of searchlights that carve up the night sky to celebrate a store's opening or a war's end. "Light," I say to Jesse. "Sunlight. We're almost above the clouds." Wherever the beams strike, they turn cobwebs into jeweled diagrams, bracelet limbs with rhinestones of dew. Cloud vapors turn to smoke.

The blue glimpsed between trees gradually thickens, turns solid, and we emerge onto a treeless stony ridge. Clear sky above, flotillas of clouds below, mountains humping their dark green backs as far as I can see. The sight of so many slick backs arching above the clouds reminds me of watching porpoises from a ship in the Gulf of Mexico. Vapors spiral up and down between cloud layers as if on escalators. Entire continents and hemispheres and galaxies of mist drift by. I sit on the trail with backpack propped against a stone ledge, to watch this migration.

* * *

No peace for meditation with an eleven-month-old on your back. An ache in my shoulders signals that Jesse, so near the ground, is leaning out of the pack to capture something. A pebble or beetle to swallow? A stick to gnaw? Moss, it turns out, an emerald hunk of it ripped from the rockface. "Moss," I tell him, as he rotates this treasure about three inches in front of his eyes. "Here, feel," and I stroke one of his palms across the velvety clump. He tugs the hand free and resumes his private exploration. This independence grows on him these days faster than his hair.

"Clouds," I tell him, pointing out into the gulf of air. Jesse glances up, sees only vagueness where I see a ballet of shapes, and so he resumes his scrutiny of the moss. "Not to eat," I warn him. When I check on him again half a minute later, the moss is half its former size and his lips are powdered with green. Nothing to do but hoist him out of the pack, dig what I can from his mouth, then plop him back in, meanwhile risking spilling both of us down the mountainside. A stare down the skittery slope reminds me of my wife's warning, that I have no business climbing this mountain alone with a baby. She's right, of course. But guilt, like the grace of God, works in strange ways, and guilt drives me up here among the skittery rocks to watch clouds with my son.

"Let Daddy have it," I say, teasing the hunk of moss from his hand. "Have a stick, pretty stick." While he imprints the stick with the marks of his teeth, four above and two below, I spit on the underside of the moss and glue it back down to the rock. Grow, I urge it. Looking more closely at the rockface, I see that it is crumbling beneath roots and weather, sluffing off like old skin. The entire mountain is migrating, not so swiftly as the clouds, but just as surely, heading grain-by-grain to the sea.

Jesse seems to have acquired some of the mountain's mass as I stand upright again and hoist his full weight. With the stick he idly swats me in the ear.

The trail carries us through woods again, then up along a ridge to the clearing at the top of Hardesty Mountain. There is no dramatic feeling of expansiveness, as there is on some peaks, because here the view is divvied up into modest sweeps by Douglas firs, cottonwoods, great gangling heaps of briars. The forest has laid siege to the rocky crest, and will probably abolish the view altogether before Jesse is old enough to carry his own baby up here. For now, by moving from spot to spot on the summit, I can see in all directions. What I see mostly are a few thousand square miles of humpbacked mountains looming through the clouds. Once in Ohio I lived in a valley that the Army Corps of Engineers thought would make a convenient bed for a reservoir. So the Mahoning River was dammed, and as the waters backed up in that valley, covering everything but the highest ridges, drowning my childhood, they looked very much like these clouds poured among the mountains.

"Ba! Ba!" Jesse suddenly bellows, leaping in his saddle like a bronco rider. Bath, I wonder? Bed? Bottle? Ball? He has been prolific of b-words lately, and their tail-ends are hard to tell apart. Ball, I finally decide, for there at the end of the arrow made by his arm is the moon, a chalky peachpit hanging down near the horizon. "Moon," I say. "Ba! Ba!" he insists. Let it stay a ball for a while, something to play catch with, roll across the linoleum. His sister's first sentence was, "There's the moon." Her second was, "Want it, Daddy." So began her astronomical yearnings, my astronomical failures. She has the itch for space flight in her, my daughter does. Jesse is still too much of a pup for me to say whether he has caught it.

We explore the mountaintop while the ocean of cloud gradually rises. There are charred rings from old campfires. In a sandy patch red-painted bricks are laid in the shape of a letter A. Not large enough to be visible from airplanes. If Hardesty Mountain were in a story by Hawthorne, of course, I could use the scarlet A to accuse it of some vast geological harlotry. If this were a folklore mountain, I could explain the letter as an alphabetical label left by giants. But since this is no literary landscape, I decide that the bricks formed the foundation for some telescope or radio transmitter or other gismo back in the days when this summit had a lookout tower.

Nearby is another remnant from those days, a square plank cover for a cistern. The boards are weathered to a silvery sheen, with rows of rust-blackened nailheads marking the joints. Through a square opening at the center of the planks I catch a glint. Water? Still gathering here after all these years? Leaning over the hole, one boot on the brittle planks, I see that the glint is from a tin can. The cistern is choked with trash.

At the very peak, amidst a jumble of rocks, we find nine concrete piers that once supported the fire-tower. By scrooching down beside one of those piers I can rest Jesse's weight on the concrete, and relieve the throb in my neck. I imagine the effort of hauling enough materials up this mountain to build a tower. Surely they used horses, or mules. Not men with backpacks. So what became of the tower when the Forest Service, graduated to spotter planes, no longer needed it? Did they pry out every nail and carry the boards back down again? A glance at the ground between my feet supplies the answer. Wedged among the rocks, where rains cannot wash them away, are chunks of glass, some of them an inch thick. I pick up one that resembles a tongue, about the size for a cocker spaniel. Another one, a wad of convolutions, might be a crystalline brain. Peering up through it at the sun, I see fracture lines and tiny bubbles. Frozen in the seams where one molten layer lapped onto another there are ashes. Of course they didn't dismantle the tower and lug its skeleton down the mountain. They waited for a windless day after a drenching rain and they burned it.

The spectacle swiftly fills me: the mountain peak like a great torch, a volcano. The tower heaving on its nine legs. The windows bursting from the heat, tumbling among the rocks, fusing into molten blobs, the glass taking on whatever shape it cooled against.

There should be nails. Looking closer I find them among the shards of glass, sixteen-penny nails mostly, what we called spikes when I was building houses. Each one is somber with rust, but perfectly straight, never having been pried from wood. I think of the men who drove those nails, the way sweat stung in their eyes, the way their forearms clenched with every stroke of the hammer, and I wonder if any of them were still around when the tower was burned. The Geological Survey marker, a round lead disk driven into a rock beside one of the piers, is dated 1916. Most likely the tower already stood atop the mountain in that year. Most likely the builders are all dead by now.

So on its last day the Hardesty fire-tower became a fire-tower in earnest. Yesterday I read that two American physicists shared the Nobel Prize for discovering the background radiation left over from the Big Bang, which set our universe in motion some fifteen billion years ago. Some things last. Not forever, of course, but for a long time, like radiation, like bits of glass. I gather a few of the nails, some lumps of glass, a screw. Stuffing these shreds of evidence in my pocket, I discover the graham cracker in its wrapping of cellophane, and I realize I have not thought of Jesse for some minutes, have forgotten that he is riding me. That can only mean one thing. Sure enough, he is asleep, head scrunched down into the pack. Even while I peek at him over my shoulder he is changing, neurons hooking up secret connections in his brain, calcium swelling his bones like mud in river deltas.

Smell warns me that the clouds have reached us. Looking out, the only peaks I can see are the Three Sisters, each of them a shade over 10,000 feet. Except for those peaks and the rocks where I stand, everything is cotton. There are no more clouds to watch, only Cloud, unanimous whiteness, an utter absence of shape. A panic seizes me—the same panic I used to feel as a child crossing the street when approaching cars seemed to have my name written on their grilles. Suddenly the morning's nightmare comes back to me: everything I know is chalked upon a blackboard, and while I watch a hand erases every last mark.

Terror drives me down the Hardesty trail, down through vapors that leach color from the ferns, past trees that are dissolving. Stumps and downed logs lose their shape, merge into the clouds. The last hundred yards of the trail I jog. Yet Jesse never wakes until I scooch him out of the backpack and wrestle him into the car-harness. His bellowing defies the clouds, the creeping emptiness. I bribe him with sips of water, a graham cracker. But nothing comforts him, or comforts me, while we drive down the seven gravelled miles of logging road to the highway. There we sink into open space again. The clouds are a featureless gray overhead. Jesse's internal weather shifts, and he begins one of his calm babbling orations, contentedly munching his cracker. The thread of his voice slowly draws me out of the annihilating ocean of whiteness. "Moon," he is piping from the backseat, "moon, moon!" *–Scott Sanders*

BARBARA MOORE

ROOM BY MOONLIGHT

In a saving smell of bedclothes, the moon
Collects, fire shirt
At the window; our search develops
In this direction. What are deaths,
There is only this road which leads from
The thought of you emerging like a clarity
At my elbow, nor is there anything like
Our salt.

Music has porches, pitched this way
From cadence to cadence, what
You took up when you lifted me
Thus far: I address myself to your hands
As we redden, you ascend my spine,
The bedclothes thump, all
The hampers in the land responding,
And we allow ourselves space to rain

In this skin which leans like a bush
From the crevice of our departures.
Don't move, the door will open, a sentence
Slip through, perfecting itself,
Threatening us with dazzling coherencies
In the room where we have just been born.
Sleep, it's
What we come for, the juices

Drying on our foreheads,
Riding, riding until morning,
Your shoulder which bumps and stays.
This is the moon, a thin tunic,
White enough by most standards
To do justice to our eyes, their defections,
Our bodies opening like bewildered cliffs,
Grappling, unsteady with candor.

Wealth

Andrew Carnegie's "Wealth" first appeared in the North American Review for June, 1889. We reprint it as part of our occasional historical self-consciousness, and because the philosophy expressed by Mr. Carnegie seems not only appropriate to the American present, but even slightly more enlightened than today's spokesmen might have it.

The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. The Indians are to-day where civilized man then was. When visiting the Sioux, I was led to the wigwam of the chief. It was just like the others in external appearance, and even within the difference was trifling between it and those of the poorest of his braves. The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measures the change which has come with civilization.

This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nay, essential for the progress of the race, that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor. Without wealth there can be no Maecenas. The "good old times" were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as to-day. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both—not the least so to him who serves—and would sweep away civilization with it. But whether the change be for good or ill, it is upon us, beyond our power to alter, and therefore to be accepted and made the best of. It is a waste of time to criticise the inevitable.

It is easy to see how the change has come. One illustration will serve for almost every phase of the cause. In the manufacture of products we have the whole story. It applies to all combinations of human industry, as stimulated and enlarged by the inventions of this scientific age. Formerly articles were manufactured at the domestic hearth or in small shops which formed part of the household. The master and his apprentices worked side by side, the latter living with the master, and therefore subject to the same conditions. When these apprentices rose to be masters, there was little or no change in their mode of life, and they, in turn, educated in the same routine succeeding apprentices. There was, substantially, social equality, and even political equality, for those engaged in industrial pursuits had then little or no political voice in the State.

But the inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was crude articles at high prices. To-day the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the generation preceding this would have deemed incredible. In the commercial world similar causes have produced similar results, and the race is benefited thereby. The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessaries of life. The laborer has now more comforts than the farmer had a few generations ago. The farmer has more luxuries than the landlord had, and is more richly clad and better housed. The landlord has books and pictures rarer, and appointments more artistic, than the King could then obtain.

The price we pay for this salutary change is, no doubt, great. We assemble thousands of operatives in the factory, in the mine, and in the counting-house, of whom the employer can know little or nothing, and to whom the employer is little better than a myth. All intercourse between them is at an end. Rigid Castes are formed, and, as usual, mutual ignorance breeds mutual distrust. Each Caste is without sympathy for the other, and ready to credit anything disparaging in regard to it. Under the law of competition, the employer of thousands is forced into the strictest economies, among which the rates paid to labor figure prominently, and often there is friction between the employer and the employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor. Human society loses homogeneity.

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still, for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race. Having accepted these, it follows that there must be great scope for the exercise of special ability in the merchant and in the manufacturer who has to conduct affairs upon a great scale. That this talent for organization and management is rare among men is proved by the fact that it invariably secures for its possessor enormous rewards, no matter where or under what laws or conditions. The experienced in affairs always rate the *man* whose services can be obtained as a partner as not only the first consideration, but such as to render the question of his capital scarcely worth considering, for such men soon create capital; while, without the special talent required, capital soon takes wings. Such men become interested in firms or corporations using millions; and estimating only simple interest to be made upon the capital invested, it is inevitable that their income must exceed their expenditures, and that they must accumulate wealth. Nor is there any middle ground which such men can occupy, because the great manufacturing or commercial concern which does not earn at least interest upon its capital soon becomes bankrupt. It must either go forward or fall behind: to stand still is impossible. It is a condition essential for its successful operation that it should be thus far profitable, and even that, in addition to interest on capital, it should make profit. It is a law, as certain as any of the others named, that men possessed of this peculiar talent for affairs, under the free play of economic forces, must, of necessity, soon be in receipt of more revenue than can be judiciously expended upon themselves; and this law is as beneficial for the race as the others.

Objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order, because the condition of the race is better with these than it has been with any others which have been tried. Of the effect of any new substitutes proposed we cannot be sure. The Socialist or Anarchist who seeks to overturn present conditions is to be regarded as attacking the foundation upon which civilization itself rests, for civilization took its start from the day that the capable, industrious workman said to his incompetent and lazy fellow, "If thou dost not sow, thou shalt not reap," and thus ended primitive Communism by separating the drones from the bees. One who studies this subject will soon be brought face to face with the conclusion that upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends—the right of the laborer to his hundred dollars in the savings bank, and equally the legal right of the millionaire to his millions. To those who propose to substitute Communism for this intense Individualism the answer, therefore, is: The race has tried that. All progress from that barbarous day to the present time has resulted from its displacement. Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy that produce it. But even if we admit for a moment that it might be better for the race to discard its present foundation, Individualism,—that it is a nobler ideal that man should labor, not for himself alone, but in and for a brotherhood of his fellows, and share with them all in common, realizing Swedenborg's idea of Heaven, where, as he says, the angels derive their happiness, not from laboring for self, but for each other,—even admit all this, and a sufficient answer is, This is not evolution, but revolution. It necessitates the changing of human nature itself—a work of aeons, even if it were good to change it, which we cannot know. It is not practicable in our day or in our age. Even if desirable theoretically, it belongs to another and long-succeeding sociological stratum. Our duty is with what is practicable now; with the next step possible in our day and generation. It is criminal to waste our energies in endeavoring to uproot, when all we can profitably or possibly accomplish is to bend the universal tree of humanity a little in the direction most favorable to the production of good fruit under existing circumstances. We might as well urge the destruction of the highest existing type of man because he failed to reach our ideal as to favor the destruction of Individualism, Private Property, the Law of Accumulation of Wealth, and the Law of Competition; for these are the highest results of human experience, the soil in which society so far has produced the best fruit. Unequally or unjustly, perhaps, as these laws sometimes operate, and imperfect as they appear to the Idealist, they are, nevertheless, like the highest type of man, the best and most valuable of all that humanity has yet accomplished.

* * *

We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few. Thus far, accepting conditions as they exist, the situation can be surveyed and pronounced good. The question then arises,—and, if the foregoing be correct, it is the only question with which we have to deal,—What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? And it is of this great question that I believe I offer the true solution. It will be understood that *fortunes* are here spoken of, not moderate sums saved by many years of effort, the returns from which are required for the comfortable maintenance and education of families. This is not *wealth*, but only *competence*, which it should be the aim of all to acquire.

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered during their lives by its possessors. Under the first and second modes most of the wealth of the world that has reached the few has hitherto been applied. Let us in turn consider each of these modes. The first is the most injudicious. In monarchical countries, the estates and the greatest portion of the wealth are left to the first son, that the vanity of the parent may be gratified by the thought that his name and title are to descend to succeeding generations unimpaired. The condition of this class in Europe today teaches the futility of such hopes or ambitions. The successors have become impoverished through their follies or from the fall in the value of land. Even in Great Britain the strict law of entail has been found inadequate to maintain the status of an hereditary class. Its soil is rapidly passing into the hands of the stranger. Under republican institutions the division of property among the children is much fairer, but the question which forces itself upon thoughtful men in all lands is: Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is it not misguided affection? Observation teaches that, generally speaking, it is not well for the children that they should be so burdened. Neither is it well for the state. Beyond providing for the wife and daughters moderate sources of income, and very moderate allowances indeed, if any, for the sons, men may well hesitate, for it is no longer questionable that great sums bequeathed oftener work more for the injury than for the good of the recipients. Wise men will soon conclude that, for the best interests of the members of their families and of the state, such bequests are an improper use of their means.

It is not suggested that men who have failed to educate their sons to earn a livelihood shall cast them adrift in poverty. If any man has seen fit to rear his sons with a view to their living idle lives, or, what is highly commendable, has instilled in them the sentiment that they are in a position to labor for public ends without reference to pecuniary considerations, then, of course, the duty of the parent is to see that such are provided for *in moderation*. There are instances of millionaires' sons unspoiled by wealth, who, being rich, still perform great services in the community. Such are the very salt of the earth, as valuable as, unfortunately, they are rare; still it is not the exception, but the rule, that men must regard, and, looking at the usual result of enormous sums conferred upon legatees, the thoughtful man must shortly say, "I would as soon leave to my son a curse as the almighty dollar," and admit to himself that it is not the welfare of the children, but family pride, which inspires these enormous legacies.

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, it may be said that this is only a means for the disposal of wealth, provided a man is content to wait until he is dead before it becomes of much good in the world. Knowledge of the results of legacies bequeathed is not calculated to inspire the brightest hopes of much posthumous good being accomplished. The cases are not few in which the real object sought by the testator is not attained, nor are they few in which his real wishes are thwarted. In many cases the bequests are so used as to become only monuments of his folly. It is well to remember that it requires the exercise of not less ability than that which acquired the wealth to use it so as to be really beneficial to the community. Besides this, it may fairly be said that no man is to be extolled for doing what he cannot help doing, nor is he to be thanked by the community to which he only leaves wealth at death. Men who leave vast sums in this way may fairly be thought men who would not have left it at all, had they been able to take it with them. The memories of such cannot be held in grateful remembrance, for there is no grace in their gifts. It is not to be wondered at that such bequests seem so generally to lack the blessing.

The growing disposition to tax more and more heavily large estates left at death is a cheering indication of the growth of a salutary change in public opinion. The State of Pennsylvania now takes—subject to some exceptions—one-tenth of the property left by its citizens. The budget presented in the British Parliament the other day proposes to increase the death-duties; and, most significant of all, the new tax is to be a graduated one. Of all forms of taxation, this seems the wisest. Men who continue hoarding great sums all their lives, the proper use of which for public ends would work good to the community, should be made to feel that the community, in the form of the state, cannot thus be deprived of its proper share. By taxing estates heavily at death the state marks its condemnation of the selfish millionaire's unworthy life.

It is desirable that nations should go much further in this direction. Indeed, it is difficult to set bounds to the share of a rich man's estate which should go at his death to the public through the agency of the state, and by all means such taxes should be graduated, beginning at nothing upon moderate sums to dependents, and increasing rapidly as the amounts swell, until of the millionaire's hoard, as of Shylock's, at least

"——— The other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state."

This policy would work powerfully to induce the rich man to attend to the administration of wealth during his life, which is the end that society should always have in view, as being that by far most fruitful for the people. Nor need it be feared that this policy would sap the root of enterprise and render men less anxious to accumulate, for to the class whose ambition it is to leave great fortunes and be talked about after their death, it will attract even more attention, and, indeed, be a somewhat nobler ambition to have enormous sums paid over to the state from their fortunes.

* * *

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes; but in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor—a reign of harmony—another ideal, differing, indeed, from that of the Communist in requiring only the further evolution of existing conditions, not the total overthrow of our civilization. It is founded upon the present most intense individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal state, in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good, and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if it had been distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this, and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellow-citizens and spent for public purposes, from which the masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among them through the course of many years in trifling amounts.

If we consider what results flow from the Cooper Institute, for instance, to the best portion of the race in New York not possessed of means, and compare these with those which would have arisen for the good of the masses from an equal sum distributed by Mr. Cooper in his lifetime in the form of wages, which is the highest form of distribution, being for work done and not for charity, we can form some estimate of the possibilities for the improvement of the race which lie embedded in the present law of the accumulation of wealth. Much of this sum, if distributed in small quantities among the people, would have been wasted in the indulgence of appetite, some of it in excess, and it may be doubted whether even the part put to the best use, that of adding to the comforts of the home, would have yielded results for the race, as a race, at all comparable to those which are flowing and are to flow from the Cooper Institute from generation to generation. Let the advocate of violent or radical change ponder well this thought.

We might even go so far as to take another instance, that of Mr. Tilden's bequest of five millions of dollars for a free library in the city of New York, but in referring to this one cannot help saying involuntarily, How much better if Mr. Tilden had devoted the last years of his own life to the proper administration of this immense sum; in which case neither legal contest nor any other cause of delay could have interfered with his aims. But let us assume that Mr. Tilden's millions finally become the means of giving to this city a noble public library, where the treasures of the world contained in books will be open to all forever, without money and without price. Considering the good of that part of the race which congregates in and around Manhattan Island, would its permanent benefit have been better promoted had these millions been allowed to circulate in small sums through the hands of the masses? Even the most strenuous advocate of Communism must entertain a doubt upon this subject. Most of those who think will probably entertain no doubt whatever.

Poor and restricted are our opportunities in this life; narrow our horizon; our best work most imperfect; but rich men should be thankful for one inestimable boon. They have it in their power during their lives to busy themselves in organizing benefactions from which the masses of their fellows will derive lasting advantage, and thus dignify their own lives. The highest life is probably to be reached, not by such imitation of the life of Christ as Count Tolstoï gives us, but, while animated by Christ's spirit, by recognizing the changed conditions of this age, and adopting modes of expressing this spirit suitable to the changed conditions under which we live; still laboring for the good of our fellows, which was the essence of His life and teaching, but laboring in a different manner.

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: First, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.

We are met here with the difficulty of determining what are moderate sums to leave to members of the family; what is modest, unostentatious living; what is the test of extravagance. There must be different standards for different conditions. The answer is that it is as impossible to name exact amounts or actions as it is to define good manners, good taste, or the rules of

DON BOGEN

FAMILY ALBUM

You are turning the black pages
in the living room. There's no one there.
Each leaf, heavy and stiff,
dredges the still river of air,
hangs at its apex, then drops
you back into another age.

The black door shuts. You are just five,
huddling on a Lake Erie beach
between the two walls of your parents.
The glare makes you all smile, each
face the same pale overblown
balloon. Nobody seems alive.

Now a birthday. Combed and posed,
you glower under a paper hat.
Another party shot: that teenage
summer you started getting fat,
caught with a Coke by the poolside
in your two-piece, overexposed.

As night comes on, the aging child's stare
darkens. You never earned
what your parents' cheap lens framed,
held and called the past. You turn
the black pages that lie on the air
of the living room. There's no one there.

IRENE MCKINNEY

LIMITED ACCESS

The white road winds and loops
And narrows down to a flavor
Of burnt earth, the story of sunstone
And moonstone, an injunction to travel.

Some of us are dreaming of earth's sunflowers
And her blasts of forsythia, and that she
Is not a she; inside this enormous
Limited space, inside this mitosis
Of light, the white road loops and spins
And trawls its load of stars.
The brothers and sisters of enormous flavors
Live in their green houses, saying: Anise,
The cream inside the moon, sun butter,
Black bread. These spasms, these burns.

propriety; but, nevertheless, these are verities, well known although undefinable. Public sentiment is quick to know and to feel what offends these. So in the case of wealth. The rule in regard to good taste in the dress of men or women applies here. Whatever makes one conspicuous offends the canon. If any family be chiefly known for display, for extravagance in home, table, equipage, for enormous sums ostentatiously spent in any form upon itself,—if these be its chief distinctions, we have no difficulty in estimating its nature or culture. So likewise in regard to the use or abuse of its surplus wealth, or to generous, free-handed coöperation in good public uses, or to unabated efforts to accumulate and hoard to the last, whether they administer or bequeath. The verdict rests with the best and most enlightened public sentiment. The community will surely judge, and its judgments will not often be wrong.

* * *

The best uses to which surplus wealth can be put have already been indicated. Those who would administer wisely must, indeed, be wise, for one of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy. Of every thousand dollars spent in so called charity today, it is probable that $950 is unwisely spent; so spent, indeed, as to produce the very evils which it proposes to mitigate or cure. A well-known writer of philosophic books admitted the other day that he had given a quarter of a dollar to a man who approached him as he was coming to visit the house of his friend. He knew nothing of the habits of this beggar; knew not the use that would be made of this money, although he had every reason to suspect that it would be spent improperly. This man professed to be a disciple of Herbert Spencer; yet the quarter-dollar given that night will probably work more injury than all the money which its thoughtless donor will ever be able to give in true charity will do good. He only gratified his own feelings, saved himself from annoyance,—and this was probably one of the most selfish and very worst actions of his life, for in all respects he is most worthy.

Coming in the NAR:

Clancy Sigal on English Working Men's Clubs

Fiction by William E. Wilson, Lew McCreary, Richard Currey, Daniel Halpern, Reg Saner, and others.

A Special Poetry Supplement (lest you think we've forgotten)

Essays by David Hellerstein, John R. Reed, Margaret Wherry, Stephen Minot, Susan Toth, & Bruce Berger

In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by alms-giving. Those worthy of assistance, except in rare cases, seldom require assistance. The really valuable men of the race never do, except in cases of accident or sudden change. Every one has, of course, cases of individuals brought to his own knowledge where temporary assistance can do genuine good, and these he will not overlook. But the amount which can be wisely given by the individual for individuals is necessarily limited by his lack of knowledge of the circumstances connected with each. He is the only true reformer who is as careful and as anxious not to aid the unworthy as he is to aid the worthy, and, perhaps, even more so, for in alms-giving more injury is probably done by rewarding vice than by relieving virtue.

The rich man is thus almost restricted to following the examples of Peter Cooper, Enoch Pratt of Baltimore, Mr. Pratt of Brooklyn, Senator Stanford, and others, who know that the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise—parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste, and public institutions of various kinds, which will improve the general condition of the people;—in this manner returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.

Thus is the problem of Rich and Poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free; the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor; intrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself. The best minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race in which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows save by using it year by year for the general good. This day already dawns. But a little while, and although, without incurring the pity of their fellows, men may die sharers in great business enterprises from which their capital cannot be or has not been withdrawn, and is left chiefly at death for public uses, yet the man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth, which was his to administer during life, will pass away "unwept, unhonored, and unsung," no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will then be: "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced."

Such, in my opinion, is the true Gospel concerning Wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the Rich and the Poor, and to bring "Peace on earth, among men Good-Will."

–Andrew Carnegie

Entropy: a new worldview, by Jeremy Rifkin with Ted Howard. Viking, $11.95.

Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness would be satisfied (Matthew 5:6). Jeremy Rifkin so hungers. He finds in the current energy crisis a demand for rapid complete change of the way people live. Nothing less can avert catastrophe for the human species. He, therefore, thirsts for a moral absolute for guiding us into the path of righteousness.

What then is our cultural sin? We have built our advanced industrial civilization on the sands of nonrenewable energy resources. Rifkin, a futurist in the "limits to growth" school of thought, predicts the exhaustion of these for all practical purposes in the next few decades. As these sands of "stored sun," oil, coal, gas, shift, our "high-energy flow-through" technology will lose its footing, sending troubles tremoring through our social, political, economic, and personal lives.

How shall we be saved? Rifkin sees the answer clearly in one master idea borrowed from thermonuclear physics; in it he discovered the moral absolute for diagnosing our sin and for effecting our salvation. This is "Entropy," the second law of thermodynamics, wherein it is revealed that

> Matter and energy can only be changed in one direction, that is, from usable to unusable, or from available to unavailable, or from ordered to disordered. In essence the second law says that everything in the entire universe began with structure and value and is irrevocably moving in the direction of random chaos and waste. (*Entropy*, p. 6)

The universe physically is a downhill run headed toward its ultimate "heat death." All technological labor-saving machines do not "save time" but rather "speed up" the changes in matter and energy, increasing the rate at which the universe decays. This description of the thermodynamics of the universe is his absolute for explaining the moral dynamics of civilization.

Most of this brief book is an exploration of human history and the present modern age for signs of entropy at work. The evolution of human civilizations is marked by "energy watersheds" that forced technical and social changes. Modern life is plagued by inflation and social difficulties because it has ignored entropy. Repeatedly he criticizes the "modern mechanical worldview" based on Newton's physics. Then from this physics John Locke and Adam Smith dreamed liberalism and capitalism. A correct understanding of entropy reveals the fatal flaw in this worldview, the false belief that nature furnishes an inexhaustible supply of energy for human use. Rifkin proposes a post-modern worldview drawing upon entropy to give us a clear picture of our situation. From this new physics Rifkin finds the motivation which will move us from a high-entropy to a low-entropy society, from nonrenewable to renewable solar energy resources. The old physics is dead; long live the new.

In the final part of his book, Rifkin sketches the intellectual, social and moral elements of this new worldview. He eagerly admits how complete a cultural transformation he wants us to make. He is less forthcoming with the political and economic ways for effecting this transition in "one generation."

His basic advice is a slogan recently used by certain visual artists to describe their work, *i.e.* "less is more." (206) As he explains,

> Slowing down the entropy process to a pace more closely attuned to the entropic process in nature requires both minimizing energy flow-through and redistributing the smaller amounts of energy more equitably among all members of society. (195)

This is not only true in his view within a society, but among all the societies on the earth. Developing nations must give up the dream of becoming advanced industrial nations. Advanced nations, such as Japan, America, or Europe's, etc., must slow down their development, simplify their life-styles, and negotiate with the Third World an equitable distribution of wealth and of productive resources. Clearly this program suggests that "less" is more only for material resources, not for political talk where more will be needed.

Furthermore, the new Entropic Society will require a decentralization of technological and social life toward human settlements more like the steady-state villages of pre-industrial civilizations.

> The Solar Age will require a greater conformity to the ancient rhythms of life. While small, appropriate technology relying on very limited remaining stocks of nonrenewable energy will still be used where absolutely essential, the bulk of transforming work will revert back to human and animal labor as it has in every other period of history before the Industrial Age. (203)

"Less" is more manual labor for more, not fewer.

Implicit in Rifkin's view of the future is a hope for a religious means of effecting this cultural transformation, rather than political coercion. He calls for a Second Christian Reformation. True also, we can learn from the religions of Asia, especially Buddhism, about the spiritual significance of minimizing energy flow-through. Meditate instead of mess with matter; seek oneness with Nature rather than impose our order. Christians must abandon "dominion" over nature and accept their "stewardship" of God's universe. The Entropy Law is God's Law for our universe. Christians, therefore, must obey it as they would all of God's Laws.

> There is no way to escape the Entropy Law. This supreme physical rule of the universe pervades every facet of our existence. Because everything is energy, and because energy is irrevocably moving along a one-way path from the usable to nonusable forms, the Entropy Law provides the framework for all human activity. (241)

This religious change of heart by American Christians is a shift from the old Protestant Work Ethic, a part of the modern mechanical worldview that ignored entropy. Instead we must make a new theological covenant with God's fixed creation of the Entropy Law. The old ethic encouraged industrial growth, whereas the new ethic of conservation will lead to acceptance of a steady-state economy. He notes that without this change of hearts among American Christians, in a future energy panic we might become supporters of a fascist corporate capitalism. We might then fight "resource" wars to sustain our high-energy life-styles, an unforgiveable sin against God's Entropy Law.

Rifkin also sees a new temptation

on the horizon. Some thinkers have found Ilya Prigogine's work in nonequilibrium thermodynamics, how biological organisms use energy, a possible paradigm to support the old "growth" model of human civilization. (244ff.) He chastizes the technological optimists for their determination to use biogenetic technology to sustain the present high-entropy society. This bioengineering solution is a false option. To find renewable energy resources for our technology in the microbiological process of living organisms is a faustian bargain. It will speed-up energy flow-through so greatly that in fifty years, according to Rifkin, we could irreversibly exhaust the basic genetic resources of the planet. These new bioengineers base their energy optimism on the fact that our planet is an open biological system living off the renewable source of the sun. But the matter-energy of the earth's crust is not unlimited like sunlight, says Rifkin. We risk in this new technology the ecological balance of the planet as a living organism. He notes the pride we exhibit in this proposing to undo what nature has spent millions of years doing. We violate the universe's natural law at our peril.

> The only hope for the survival of the species is for the human race to abandon its aggression against the planet and seek to accommodate itself to the natural order. (256)

The new genetic technology, then, is for Rifkin just one last modern futile assault on the Entropy Law.

He concludes his book with a plea for us all to accept the spiritual vision implicit in the Entropy Law. We moderns resist this vision because it makes us face the finite and temporary nature of the universe and of ourselves. Some go so far as to see the expansion of consciousness as the counter to entropy, making spirit anti-entropic. Rifkin knows this is not so. The more we do the less we can be, spiritually. There is no future perfect state toward which we are evolving; we can not speed up entropy in order to quicken the End. There is only Now. Revelation and cosmic consciousness are Now, if we accept full responsibility for our actions in relationship to this universe as it truly is.

Rifkin's Credo then is:

> The Entropy Law answers the central question that every culture throughout history has to grapple with: How should humans behave in the world? . . . Preserving and enhancing life, in all of its forms, requires available energy. The more energy available, the greater the prospects for extending the possibilities of life into the future. . . . The more energy each of us uses up, the less is available for all life that comes after us. The ultimate moral imperative, then, is to waste as little energy as possible. By so doing, we are expressing our love of life and our loving commitment to the continued unfolding of all of life. (259-260)

Less is more future; less is more love; less is more moral. His moral absolute, Entropy, found, his hunger for righteousness in this universe, Love, satisfied, his plea for our conversion to this new faith, "Less is More," spoken, Rifkin is finished.

* * *

While I admire his hunger and his persistence in seeking satisfaction, this work leaves me unnourished in several ways. Rifkin's 1979 book, *The Emerging Order: God in the Age of Scarcity,* (New York: Putnam, 1979), is better written. There also he critiqued Modernism and Liberalism. Further, he ingeniously, if unconvincingly for me, suggested his hope for cultural transformation of American political and economic life by the Evangelical and Charismatic Christian movements. At least that was historically imaginative and politically plausible.

We got the Moral Majority; in Rifkin's terms a high-entropy, America-first, capitalism-is-best, damn-the-torpedoes, full-speed-ahead-on-industrial-growth vision of our future. *Entropy*, for all its different vision, shares their strident spiritual sureness and their righteous religious rhetoric.

The Emerging Order was instructive; *Entropy*, just preachy. Rifkin's second book suffers from superficial surveys of difficult scientific and political matters. At the same time it seems padded because of his single-minded use of entropy to explain everything. Rifkin should have followed his own advice when it came to writing books: less is more.

On the other hand, with all its faults this book does address the heart of the matter: that the debate over the future of industrial society is a moral one. Although Rifkin's answer is inadequate, his book is frank in the starkness of its ethical demand about energy, the environment, and the human future.

First, Rifkin rightly insists that the "energy crisis" reflects fundamental flaws in the modern worldview and in the technological base of industrial civilization. So it will not go away. The Entropy Law raises for urgent discussion the ethical question of just how elaborate or simple a material culture we can afford environmentally. There is a diminishing flow of natural energy upon which to build any human society. Entropy is an insight that can make us more self-conscious and self-critical about the costs and benefits of any technology over a given time span.

With spiritual distaste, he rejects this pragmatic "accounting" mentality, though I for one will not mind if the Harvard Business School includes entropy in its MBA curriculum. My guess is that we need to adopt a "roll-over" model of technical change which will account in advance for the "half-life" of any specific technology used. In a given energy environment a technology has an efficient beginning and a costly ending. Plotting its time-span would allow for the cost of its depreciating energy efficiency to go towards the research and development of a successor technology. Entropy accounting would encourage the development of a high, medium, and low level mixture of technological complexity in our society. We need planned diversity in our ways of getting things done because of the Entropy Law, if we are to stabilize the social development of any human culture. High-tech cities or high-labor villages are both inherently unstable socially if they are narrowly based on a single master technology. Whatever their energy resource base, specialization leads to an increase in the entropy or cost. The idea of entropy, however, suggests we can not stop change, so we must learn to manage our selves and our needs in relationship to this environmental process. Slowing down is probably not as good a strategy as diversifying.

In the second place, I further agree that the present crisis points to the global need to move toward a more equitable distribution of wealth and of productive technical and natural resources. Entropic efficiency and ethical justice both require this. Surely this move might best be achieved as a religious change in human attitudes toward nature and our species. Rifkin's fears of wars to control the remaining nonrenewable energy resources is justified and is our most immediate clear and present danger. I appreciate his warning to conservative Christians of their temptation to support a fascist and authoritarian solution in America and in the world. I wish his next book might explore more fully that temptation. But the idea of entropy does not seem helpful for this urgent task; it suggests no political strategy for moving people, especially conservative Christians, to a more communal sense of their personal interests.

My third agreement with Rifkin is his view, somewhat underdeveloped in this book, that the core purpose and central activities of the human species are spiritual. The Entropy Law, at this point, can be used as Occam's Razor for human technical goals. Less is often (if not always) more when it comes to sheer technical inventiveness among humans. The endless technological transformation of matter and of energy as the major goal for us does appear spiritually fruitless. Such technological inventiveness as *the human end* in itself is busy work. It disconnects us from the quest for unique human activity. Rifkin at many points catches the modern human hubris arising out of our technical accomplishments that leads us in our ignorance to scorn the traditional wisdom of our human predecessors on this planet. They may well have known more than we do about human nature. We have forgotten a lot. Modern science, a great human spiritual adventure in its own right, has often turned us away from our own species' life.

* * *

Ironically, Rifkin is often more representative of the modern mechanical worldview than he realizes. In each of the areas of my agreement, *i.e.* rethinking energy technology, increasing social equity, and realizing spiritual maturity, his usage of the Entropy Law undercuts the human grasp of reality. He presents a mechanistic, a materialistic, and a dualistic view of reality that denigrates human potential, so my disagreement with him arises from the different answers I give to three questions implicit throughout his work.

1. What is *natural* in this universe?
2. What is *cultural* in human life?
3. What is *spiritual* in our struggle for the real?

In answering these three questions I will use "society" as a better analog for understanding the universe than the machine. Rifkin's failure to provide an alternative non-mechanistic model to integrate his critique leads him to argue his case in single-cause, linear relationships among physical and human variables. Thus, he never escapes the mechanistic view of the universe he criticizes.

1. Rifkin treats the entropy of physical reality as if there were a *single, natural rate* by which it should work. Of course, he recognizes that entropy works at very different rates in different forms of available energy and matter. Further, he knows that the entropic process is increased or slowed by random natural events and by human technical interventions. Yet his moral and social advice is always "slow down." Less is always more natural. He faults the modern worldview for its belief in unbroken causality and physical inexhaustibility of Nature—Newton's matter in perpetual motion. Nevertheless, his own view of God's creative action is just as single, linear, and mechanical. It is the philosophical view of God's creation associated with the Eighteenth Century in Europe, so heavily under the sway of Newton's Machine. Rifkin is a deist.

If the early modern view of the universe is oversimplified in its "Perpetual Motion Machine" version, surely his "one-wind-up, now-running-down clockwork" version of God's creation is theologically not much better. Modern sub-atomic physics, where one can not even observe without changing the observed relationships, or non-equilibrium thermodynamics in biological life, where evolutionary "conversion points" between greater complexity or death occur in the history of a species, both point toward the significance of human and of non-human *interactions* in sustaining the life of this universe.

We are not spectators at an exhibition of God's ancient work, but cocreators, even of the physical reality of this universe. To be stewards it is not enough to always do "less"; remember the parable of the Ten Talents. Entropy, after all, is a human idea about a physical process. A good one, we think at present. We are less ignorant, more capable, not of escaping entropy or of dominating nature, but of coöperating with the many other realities in this universe in the shaping of our life together. Entropy guides us to the "downhill waves" in the universe that we can "surf" in our quest for useful and beautiful work as a species.

Rifkin's mechanistic view is most clear in his response to Prigogine's ideas and genetic technology. Prigogine's theory of "dissipative structures" in organic life shows there is an increase in entropy for the surrounding environment accompanying the evolution of an organism. Rifkin rejects any such thinking which may suggest that greater complexity of a life form, using more energy, is an improvement.

So, is biology a natural part of the universe? Theologically, did God create biological organisms with their necessary evolutionary processes for re-organizing the surrounding energy environment and inevitably creating greater rates of entropy? Rifkin only likes organic life when it reaches a "climactic" stage of ecological balance with its environment. He finds the "colonizing" stage of its evolutionary growth a necessary evil at best. Yet there is no single natural time period for a particular species to spend colonizing before it climaxes.

Rifkin comes close to the heresy in Christian thought called gnosticism. In early Hellenistic gnosticism there was a general belief that the physical universe was created by an evil god. The purpose of religious life was to aid the individual to free the soul or spiritual part from body, matter, the evil earth. This was the way one escaped from control of the evil god. Rifkin, obviously, does not go all the way with this myth. He wants to draw the line in his moral absolute on the side of the inorganic and the Entropy Law.

In his mind a natural rate exists there which he can then use as the ethical standard for viewing organic life and evolution. The evolutionary movement of life toward greater complexity and energy flow-through must be as little as possible, according to this ethical standard. Organic life is to be judged by the ways of inorganic life. His implicit model of organic life is the cancer cell with its uncontrollable growth. No cancerous organism, however, lives for long; it can not be taken as the model of evolutionary life. Let us grant the force of this insight for *some* societies, maybe even the advanced industrial ones we live in today, but the error in his worldview is more misleading than the usefulness of this specific insight. If the Entropy Law is the single principle for understanding the process of the universe, then organic life with its evolutionary principle falls ethically outside of God's creation. And that is a subtle, but real, gnostic rejection of the goodness of all God's creation.

An alternative insight into the universe is possible. The universe is essentially a social reality. It is not *one thing* unfolding in a simple linear fashion. It is, at least, two fundamental realities, entropy and evolution, coöperating. One can not assign physical or moral priority to one on the basis that that one is more "natural." Both are just *here*; both are a part of nature as we have been able to discover it so far. We humans need to accept with thoughtful awe the continuing co-determinative interaction of these two mighty forces, of inorganic and organic. This would seem especially the case for a theologian in the Christian tradition drawing upon the ideas of Creation and of Judgment, of beginning and of ending.

* * *

2. If Rifkin oversimplifies physical reality, he is even more simple on human reality. What is the cultural in human life? Are human language, moral codes, laws, literature, all the symbols produced by our self-conscious attempts to pursue a meaningful life together a "natural" part of the universe or not? Rifkin seems not to think so.

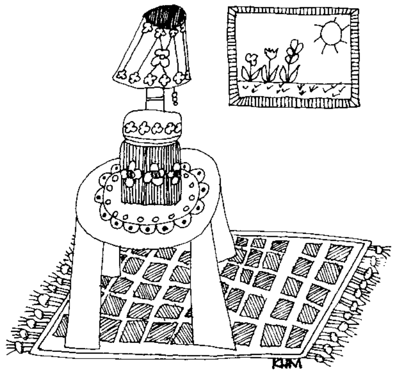
The major thrust of his argument is that our worldviews and cultural behavior patterns are largely determined by the technology we developed to use energy efficiently from the surrounding environment. If he is not quite an absolute determinist, the practical effect of viewing everything through the workings of the Entropy Law leads him to a simple form of cultural materialism. Your energy environment shapes your technology, your technology shapes your worldview, and entropy has its inevitable effect on all.

Then is the cultural only an epiphenomenon reflecting underlying physical realities? Human consciousness, personal intentions, technological inventions, political goals, religious ideas, all do reflect the material base of a given society, just as a pot reflects the clay the potter uses. Materialism like mechanistic models of reality divides in order to conquer, to create an illusion of control. In other words, from this viewpoint human cultural creations arising out of our social life are not a "natural" part of the universe.

To a materialist, the laws of nature are the scientifically described stabilities of the physical processes. What humans feel, think, and intend to do are but shadows of these more durable realities. So his mechanistic treatment of Entropy leads Rifkin to a materialistic view of culture as derivative. In its massiveness, physical reality overwhelms human initiative, human reality.

This position of social theorists always sounds strange to me. But it is common. Obviously, thinkers see their own insight as fresh and *sui generis*. But when it is materiality that determines social thought, then theorists must see themselves and their work as the result of essentially *nonhuman* physical forces. They only reflect. The contradiction here is not that physical reality shapes and influences human thought, but that all those other persons out there are not in obvious consensus about human reality. If nature is one, then why is not human thought and belief?

In fact the one undisputed social fact that the last one hundred and fifty years of a predominantly materialist social science has given us is the idea of "cultural relativity." Human beings differ rather dramatically, not about everything, but about significant things. The ways, institutions, and values of human life are the classical examples of fundamental differences. The social scientist responds that most human beings are wrong, misled by local or regional environmental circumstances; we believe parochial illusions. Yet how could we continue for so long to be so wrong if our very consciousness is determined so massively by the nonhuman forces of matter and energy around us? And how do social theorists escape their own local or regional environment's determination?



What we have in Rifkin and in much modern social thought is a failure of nerve in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries' project to produce a positive science of human life. We do not have an agreed-upon definition of the structures and mechanisms of human consciousness, or its cultural creativity, or the social life that flows from human need. Like Rifkin, most theorists look to the scientific description of nature, either inorganic or organic, to find in the nonhuman the human, to find the conscious in the preconscious. Rifkin finds in entropy a reality around which he would build a human culture, but at best he offers us the slogan, "less is more." What is true in physics should be true in humanity, he asserts.

Such a cultural materialism turns away from the task of actually describing and explaining the social processes by which humans live. There are cultural creating ways to be described, and some social scientists do so describe them, especially in field studies and case reports. Families, kinships, religions, rituals, art, drama, law, ceremonies, political offices—all exist as naturally occurring roles and relationships that compose the ways and the means of human cultures on this planet. Yet social scientists hunger and thirst after righteousness, after a single vision, a singleness to culture among humans that does not exist. Cultural relativity makes theorists absolutist in their quest to control, to reduce, to find a principle—anything—to contain the fecund rambunctious creativity of this species. Rifkin is not alone in this quest, but he is no more convincing.

There are two ways to create a single global human culture, *i.e.* coercion or conversion, politics or religion. Rifkin opts for the latter. The entropic force in our own history will finally lead us all to "internalize the Entropy paradigm." (254) Only then, he believes, will we create a planetary culture. But it would be an illusion if that culture were built with single-mindedness on entropy, for such a culture would be trying to suppress another major principle in the universe, the evolution of life. What that process will finally produce is difficult to say, but do note that evolution has already produced self-awareness in many organisms. We humans for our own survival have utilized this phenomenon with great creativity to overcome our lack of genetically transmitted behavior patterns of cultural complexity. Culture, in this sense, is our biological form of life. Perhaps this cultural work is the unique task of our species' evolving. Perhaps consciousness is a fundamental part of our species' nature, as natural a part of the universe as entropy is.

* * *

3. Finally, what is the spiritual? Rifkin wrote a religious book in *Entropy*. It is in the last analysis an appeal for religious conversion. His spiritual appeal is to rebuild personal life and political vision around the Entropy Law, for entropy is not only the basic principle of the universe's physics and the cultural norm for the construction of human society, but even more it is the fundamental spiritual insight into the human situation. I fully agree that any thorough-going ethic for humans will explicitly or implicitly be rooted in and draw its moral power from a perception of spiritual reality. I disagree, however, that human life can be informed by a spiritual principle from wholly outside the universe. If we are creatures of this place then the spirit that informs and moves the universe is in this place, too.

Then is the spiritual a natural part of the universe? Rifkin thinks not. Early in the book he says,

> [Entropy] is a law governing the horizontal world of time and space. It is mute, however, when it comes to the vertical world of spiritual transcendence. The spiritual plane is not governed by the ironclad dictates of the Entropy Law. The spirit is a nonmaterial dimension where there are no boundaries and no fixed limits to attend to. (8)

This is matter and spirit dualism. He does not really develop this worldview as a major part of his discussion, but it is the implicit framework for thinking theologically. What we find here is probably a supernaturalist dualism often associated with conservative Protestant thought in America.

This absolute spirit-matter dualism is another ironic reflection of Rifkin's inability to think beyond the modern mechanistic worldview. By protecting the spirit from the ravages of the Entropy Law he essentially makes spiritual reality irrelevant and unavailable for sustaining a human ethic in response to the contemporary social crisis. This religious conversion is *away from* the human struggle for the reality of this universe, the space-time continuum in which we exist. It shows again the gnostic spirit that rejects matter and this universe as the work of an evil God. God is made as in some Greek tragedies, *deus ex machina*. One saves the humans by intervening, mechanically, to stop the action. This implicit dualism is also the source of Rifkin's social theory which reduces human consciousness and its cultural creations to epiphenomena reflecting dimly the material processes of their energy environment. For him there is no dependable or discoverable structure and principle in human life itself.

If this is so, then the order perceived by the human mind in its scientific study of the universe is only an artifact of the physical reality and not a part of human consciousness itself. This leads to a logical mismatch, between observer and observed, between consciousness and nature. Nature has a meaningful order; consciousness does not. Thus consciousness is not just a reflection of the material structures pressing in upon it, but it is an incomplete, inadequate, and finally irrational impression of the order of the universe. This dualistic model of spirit-matter sunders the unity of human consciousness and knowledge.

Supernaturalist religion, at least in this mode, relies upon a coercive spirit that impresses itself on an imperfect consciousness as revelation or cosmic consciousness. This alien reality from outside the universe is supposedly reflected or revealed in the Entropy Law. Yet if human consciousness, as Rifkin argues, is fundamentally shaped by this natural law, then it is not capable of experiencing the spiritual in any trustable manner. After all, the spiritual in his view is not a part of Entropy's universe, it is not a natural part of the universe.

There is, of course, another possibility. The spiritual may be natural, an existent reality in this universe. If our universe is not determined solely by entropy, then other realities, *e.g.* evolution and consciousness, are naturally present in their own right, too. These other two realities seem to me of crucial importance in human ethics. They express other operating principles, perhaps closer to human thought and action, than entropy. As we understand the structures and the mechanisms of evolution we gain insight into the processes of organic life that differ from and complement the entropy process. As we understand the structures and mechanisms of consciousness and its social constructions of diverse human cultures we will gain insight into another natural principle operating in our universe.

Remember that entropy and evolution are basic parts of the processes of the universe not fully reducible to each other. This suggests to me that the universe is a social reality even at the level of its physical processes. How much more social a reality is obvious in the cultural creativity of human self-awareness? Is this not an indication that the structures and the mechanisms of the spiritual are to be discovered in our study of consciousness and its products? It is not only a vertical dimension in which the spirit is exclusively expressed in this universe, but also in its horizontal natural life as a social reality. The spirit is a natural part of this universe.

Human sociality in all its diversity expresses this larger spiritual reality. It does not exhaust in its own cultural vitality all the spiritual there is in the universe. And for all I know, the spiritual is not exhausted in its social life by this universe. So it is not so much that I wish to discard the rigid dualism of spirit-matter as an attempt to say anything about containing or limiting the spiritual. Just the opposite. It is to not crowd the spiritual out of the natural, for to do so reduces the ethical to fiats of political coercion or private mystical religious opinion. If the spiritual may be discovered in the structures and mechanisms of social life and cultural creativity, then a principled basis for a genuine human ethic could arise out of our shared historical experiences as a species on this planet in this universe.

So far we have not created a human way of life that is as coherent and enduring as we think we see in the fundamental processes of the organic and the inorganic. But turning away from our unique task in this universe is to deny what we have learned in our doing of science as a human activity. But science is not the only cultural activity with the means for perceiving the universe. There are also languages, religions, dramas, paintings, laws, whereby humans are daily struggling to see and to express the real. Observing and reflecting upon the full range of human cultural actions and artifacts in all their plurality seems a more reasonable and balanced approach for grasping the ways of our consciousness.

Rifkin recognizes the wisdom of ancient humans in their respectful cultivation of their own traditions. Yet finally he is blinded by recent scientific successes in describing the inorganic and the organic processes of the universe. Like most moderns he wants the short-cut of imposing an order found in physical reality upon the rest of natural reality, and upon the social reality of human life. Such an imposition will not endure.

A crisis such as the present predicament with energy and the environment gives us an opportunity for renewed exploration of human consciousness. To seek to discover the social ways unique to the human spirit is a better way to imagine the basis for an ethic upon which a global culture for all might be built. Rifkin yields to the temptation so characteristic of modern thought, to seek a final solution based on the present knowledge of physical reality. It leads him, as it would lead all of us, back into the dualisms of the past, either political coercion or religious quietism. For all his passion to seize the future in this book, he is steadfastly transfixed upon the past. He has built his vision on spiritual sand; he has satisfied his ethical hunger on dust. *—A. Theodore Kachel*

Penmaen Press: "Deo gratias"

Back when I was in high school in rural Minnesota, my senior English teacher—a square-jawed, troubled young man who drove a vintage white Porsche in a town of Fords and Chevies—recited to me from memory and with intense gravity the ending of Robert Frost's poem, "Two Tramps In Mud Time":

> But yield who will to their separation,
> My object in living is to unite
> My avocation and my vocation
> As my two eyes make one in sight.
> Only where love and need are one,
> And the work is play for mortal stakes,
> Is the deed ever really done
> For Heaven and the future's sakes.

His classroom was on the ground floor, and looked toward a courtyard near the entrance to the main building; to the doors of the front lobby and the big glass trophy cases. It was perhaps three-thirty in the afternoon. Shadows bisected the window-sills. I was seventeen and worked after school at a soda fountain in Anderson's Drugstore; it was all I knew, so far, of vocation. Although I didn't understand the poem then, I must have recognized—intuitively and lastingly—the sense behind his sharing of it. In fact, in many places since then, I have posted those lines on a 3 × 5 card over my desk. They seem to be one true recipe for a satisfying life, so gracefully phrased you can almost forget that a harmony of love and work is always hard won.

I don't know what forces over the years may have tried to separate from Michael McCurdy—founder, principal artist and designer, and proprietor of Penmaen Press—his love and his work, but they have evidently failed. He is a man doing what he loves to do, and his work shows it.

McCurdy's interest in printing, he says, dates back to his childhood. He was given a toy press when he was twelve, and began to set his own metal type. When he was sixteen, he produced *The Literary Journal*, which was set and printed by hand. Eventually he entered the Graphic Arts Department at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston for study toward the B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees. His associate, Michael Peich, says, in his 1977 Introduction to *The First Ten: A Penmaen Bibliography*, that in those years McCurdy "began to fuse printing with the artistic talent that would produce fine press books."

The early work was published under the name the Hillside Press, so-called because of the location of McCurdy's apartment on Boston's Beacon Hill. Hillside was dropped in 1968 in favor of "Penmaen," the name of a town in Wales—a Welsh word for "head mason." A pamphlet, *The Purpose of the National Economic League*, was published in 1968, and the name "Penmaen" became permanent. The first book, printed in 1969 in an edition of 91 copies, was *The Quaker Series*.

Books, broadsides, and other printing endeavors followed, and so did contact with writers. In 1974, Penmaen issued poet X.J. Kennedy's *Celebrations after the Death of John Brennan*, an elegy by Kennedy for a young poet—one of his students—who had taken his own life. In 1975, Penmaen published Richard Eberhart's *Poems to Poets;* in 1976, McCurdy climbed long flights of stairs to an apartment on New York's East 12th Street to deliver to Allen Ginsberg the colophon sheets for *To Eberhart from Ginsberg*. (There is a photograph of Ginsberg, the artist Lynd Ward, and McCurdy and his daughter, Heather, in the *Bibliography.)*

The 1977 *Bibliography*—"of main interest," McCurdy says, "to libraries and collectors"—is a handsome book. It has a blue cover and creamy stock. The dustjacket is illustrated with an etching of an antique metal type drawer. The *Bibliography* lists all of Penmaen's books, broadsides, and ephemera through 1977 and has plates with photographs of selected title pages and broadsides, and pictures of individuals who are connected with the press. The colophon reads:

> The printing for *The First Ten* was completed in May, 1978 at the Penmaen Press in Lincoln, Massachusetts. It was hand-printed by Penelope Reid, Ann Russo and Michael McCurdy. The type was set in Linotype Times New Roman, the display in Perpetua. The offset portion was printed at the Alpine Press. Robert Hauser designed the binding design for both the deluxe and regular editions. The deluxe edition consists of 100 books printed on Rives and was hand-bound at the Harcourt Bindery. The regular edition consists of 500 books and was bound at Robert Burlen and Son. Typography by Michael McCurdy. The deluxe edition is signed by those Penmaen associates present at the Press's celebration of its first ten years. *Deo gratias.*

Publishing of books was once a craft leaning powerfully toward art. In certain fine small presses in this country—Black Sparrow in Santa Barbara, for example, and Palaemon in North Carolina, as well as Penmaen—it is still. The antique phrase *Deo gratias* that concludes each Penmaen book suggests a scene, a handful of people and a printing press. The good smell of printers' ink. Clutter. Individual decisions. Expense and long hours. What is important here? Why, everything! The paper (Rives), the printers (their names), the design (another name), the type (Linotype Times New Roman, display in Perpetua), editions deluxe and regular, binding. Press run. *Deo gratias.*

Thanks to God for the health and time and skill to complete the project. It was successful. We are grateful. Consider, for contrast, the glassy office in Manhattan where a high-roller agent negotiates contracts in six figures—for books that will be printed on acidic paper that is fragile and broken in five or ten years, for binding that dries and cracks; books that, we are told, have a commercial six- to eight-week chance at life before they are remaindered.

The world of small independent publishing is another story altogether.

Stating the ideal, Michael Peich says, "The Penmaen Press has always strived to combine significant work with aesthetically pleasing formats. The Press does not believe in outrageously priced books that cater to the élite, nor does it promote mass produced work that masquerades as fine printing. McCurdy has sought to produce works that bridge the gap between the ostentatious and the slick. A Penmaen volume is a skillfully subtle combination of the artist, the bookmaker, and the writer."

Penmaen has two presses and a Linotype machine, plus miscellaneous equipment. They operate, according to McCurdy, "just barely in the black." The Press receives financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. In October of 1980, they held the first of what will be an annual fund-raising party at the Boston Athenaeum.

They moved in August, 1981, to a new address: RD 2, Box 145, Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230.

McCurdy says that they are presently pulling back some and "devoting more time to design and printing services, which create cash flow." They do this work under their other business, the Cambria Press. Printing and publishing books, however, remains McCurdy's first interest. He has written that the work "generates a creative process that itself is tremendously satisfying. Apart from the physical creation of books, there is the network of relationships developed between skilled individuals, as well as activity on several levels that stretches creativity beyond the making of pictures or the design of type upon a page." He calls his work an obsession.

Future books by Penmaen will be planned more consciously for a specific audience. All the early books were decided for publication by McCurdy himself. The 1978 collection of short stories by women, *Banquet*, was brought to McCurdy for consideration by Joan Norris, who became the book's editor. In 1980, the Press initiated a fiction series—novella-length, first-edition fiction—and this idea came from Michael Peich. The venture is cooperative, with McCurdy himself making final decisions. It has been important to him to bring out novellas, since they do not often see print. His taste seems to run to lean, intense, almost poetically compressed prose; to experiment rather than tradition. He says that although marketing short fiction is not easy, *Banquet* has done well and the Robert Coover book is nearly sold out.

* * *

Robert Coover's novella, *Charlie in the House of Rue,* inaugurated the fiction series. It is illustrated with a wood engraving by Jerome Kaplan. The end papers are black—a startling choice—and the text paper is heavy, silky white Mohawk Superfine. (This design is used in all three novellas in the series.)

Poor old Charlie Chaplin is dismantled in this long story. Coover uses the elements of Chaplin's films, silent action and assertive objects like canes, hats, and bannisters. The writing is studded with verbs. In the first scene with a housemaid, Charlie tips, struts, shrugs, twirls, kicks, preens, studies, sprays, arrives, and plants. In a later scene, which is worth quoting, Charlie is in the kitchen with a fat man who is drinking soup. Charlie puts out his cigar on the man's bald head, becomes horrified and swats him with a broom. The cigar falls into the soup.

> [Charlie] hurls the broom over his left shoulder into the dish cupboards, grabs up the soup bowl, lurches to the fireplace, throws the contents into the fire, ladles out another bowlful from the kettle, burning his fingers and pouring hot soup down his pantleg in his haste, limps back anxiously, trips and falls, spilling the soup, scrambles to his feet and rushes back to the kettle, fills the bowl again, returns cautiously, spills the soup in the fat man's lap, dashes back to the kettle to refill it, beginning now to delight in all this to-ing and fro-ing, recovering his skip-step grace, returns to spill the soup all over the table, bounces back once more for another bowlful, hardly pausing at the kettle, dances to the table and pours the soup on the man's head.

The writing is highly visual, and each part of the setting gets involved; nothing stands still. Nobody talks, but there are standard pratfalls, slips, and a custard pie. The difference between prose and film is that Coover adds to standard Chaplin fare elements available only to fiction: Charlie levitates, at the end he swings from a hanging lady, and a man's eye falls out. It's as though fiction can do film one better—things are possible on the page that couldn't happen in life. This could be bathetic and incredible, but as Coover writes it, the impossible is only a shading of the possible, and we believe it. In the House of Rue, Charlie blows it over and over; he's a failure. Now and then, Coover reminds us of sad truths and inner knowledges. People seem to receive distant, dismaying messages.

Charlie encounters a maid, a mournful white woman, a fat man with soup, an old man with a goatee, a policeman. The pacing is slow and deliberate at the beginning, but Coover cranks things up and at the end the fiction is racing. People and situations begin to blur together. The real trick here is that the suspense is false—nothing is really happening—and the whole story works as entertainment and black humor; there's nothing to care deeply about. Yet in the last pages we somehow do care, and the white lady is hanging by her neck—she seems to hang *forever*—and we just want Charlie to *get her down,* which of course he cannot do. That we would even hope or expect he could is rather remarkable, since he hasn't done a thing right from the first page. The ending is sad; Charlie is reduced: on the last page he's looking outward—as if from the screen—for help. The book is a small tour de force.

* * *

Passion, by Robert Steiner, is the second in Penmaen's fiction series. It is illustrated with a wood engraving by Berta Golahny.

In *Passion,* a sea captain writes his name with a beaver brush at the corners of his paintings. The protagonist, David Finch, observes that "as far as the captain was concerned he had committed an act of reality." Later, as he watches his wife and mistress come toward him out of the sea, David Finch feels "abstract as an idea."

This surrealistic novella tries very hard to commit no acts of reality, and can scarcely be talked about except in terms as abstract as an idea.

The book has almost no character development, and the thinnest of plots. There are four characters: David Finch; his wife, Veronica, who is a poet; his mistress, Rex; and his college friend from Purdue known only as "Smith." Smith is not very important to the narrative, except in one apparently critical scene near the end, where all four characters engage in group sex while watching the concluding episode of a film in which Ibo tribesmen, on the African savannah between Waharla and Uli, capture an earthpig in a net and slaughter it.

Rex is of secondary importance, except insofar as she shares the opening scene with David Finch, wherein they eat a plum together messily, drive through the hot desert, and keep hitting the birds and animals that get in the way of their car.

Veronica is a morbid poet, perhaps suicidal, and to David "the wings of her nose were lemon slices."

David Finch is an accursed observer of events. Events in this book take place in short scenes, in settings like a ship off the coast of Algiers, assorted beaches (the sun is important to passion), Addis Ababa, Colorado, and at the end in Taos, where D.H. Lawrence is invoked.

The characters are concerned with small physical imperfections—certainly nothing that would send a person roaring off to the Mayo Clinic: scabs, hangnails, vaginal infections treated with yogurt, Rex's bandaid over which she draws her stockings, Veronica's torn thumbnail in which "she said she could see history."

If we grant the writer his dream-vision; if we grant—are willing to abide—the stunning narcissism of his characters' concerns, then one might find certain interesting features in *Passion,* if not a new definition of "passion." (Steiner is certainly not the first writer to work with the potent Freudian mix of eros and death; D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* comes to mind as the most significant recent work on that theme.) Steiner's prose is taut, his imagery—at its best—shocking and original. He makes the world tilt, provides a new way of seeing:

> Inside television a dog conducts a badger out of a forest fire. It performs several heroic acts with the badger at its tail: traversing mossy boulders to the interior of a waterfall, biting doe rabbits by their scruffs in order to carry them to safety. From the badger's eyes it is clear it would prefer to get on with the escape. The blazing landscape cracks the spiny limbs of yew trees. It fells pines. Soon a child is eating a jelly sandwich, rejecting one jar for another because of the crushed nuts.

But some of his similes—and there are a lot of similes—are unfortunate:

> The flowers Rex had picked lay in water like a bowl of ulcers.

> Then it was impossible not to remember that once they had looked at each other the way elks might meet over a daisy in the snow.

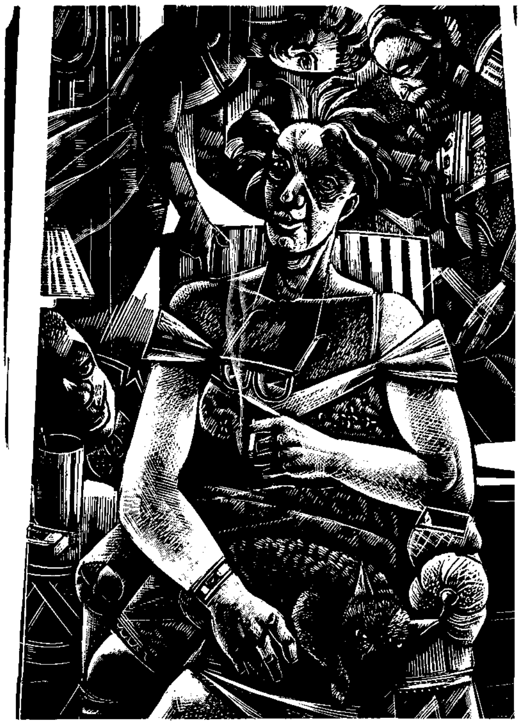
And content can become as abstract, and bloodless, as an idea:

> While Smith poured chi-chi from a pitcher David Finch sat on his neighbor's stone fence. The Blue cat was ripping a chamois on the hood of Smith's shiny Buick. His neighbor wore chinos and sneakers with no laces. He combed his hair forward with a hand.
>
> —Ah life, said Smith.

In this book, the trivial, the mundane, even the banal, are given central attention as indicators of the state of the human spirit. What is the state of a man who looks at his genitals and observes that the organ resembles a "sleeping piglet"? A loss of connection, I think. If penises are piglets and flowers are ulcers and badgers want rescue while children munch Skippy crunchy, then *everything is the same*—a kind of moral anarchy. Perhaps the idea put forward here—though surely the point of a surrealist work is not to advance an idea but rather to embody it—is that passion is anarchic, nonselective, uniformly intense, dreamish. Its form-shape is episodic. It can happen anywhere. Robert Steiner's vision reminds me of the headlights of his character's Chevy—soul-less and mechanical, they can't help what they illuminate, and once they catch an object they regard it with chilling neutrality, like the light over the surgical table.

* * *

ELIZABETH, by Brian Swann, is the third in the fiction series. It is illustrated with an original wood engraving by Michael McCurdy (above).



In this unconventional love story, the narrator—apparently a college teacher—has left his wife who was "by then without the veil of glamor I had cast over her, and I felt I was at the end of a fifty-year old marriage. My own petty despair turned increasingly to Elizabeth for interest and solace."

Elizabeth is a Russian emigrée who has grown old in America. She lives with seven cats and a dog. She is visited by a sister, assorted friends, and servants. The narrator moves into her spare room. What follows is an affecting and strange portrait of Elizabeth that becomes stronger and more interesting as it goes. It's a wonderful story idea.

The swirling narrative is written like a journal, and Elizabeth is its center point. But there is no stillness at the center. People arrive, argue, and leave again. Animals give birth, have accidents, lick blood, are stolen away. Men walk on the moon, while Elizabeth watches certain the moon will explode. The story is written in scenes that do not quite follow chronological sequence; it seems to happen over a period of two years.

Elizabeth is probably alcoholic, certainly a little crazy. Her life is a tangle of activity. She deals "in multiplication signs, but her calculations were never based on mathematics."

"A home," the narrator says, "assumes everything is an extension of itself, and nothing can happen that is not related to it, and what outside would be crazy, indecent or antisocial, at home becomes worked into the furniture.” In a curious way, Elizabeth is home to him. “We drank red wine laced with Old Grandad, and toasted Eve and all women who ever took care of a white mouse, a cat, a cow, a gerbil, or a man.”

At the end of the book, Elizabeth tells her own story. It is a story of Russian nobility. Her father was the bastard grandson of the Russian Czar. She fell in love with the Grand Duke Mirsky, and at seventeen was engaged to him. She had two marriages, the second to a Jewish composer. She knew Catherine the Great.

The narrator realizes that in a distant connection, he too is related to her.

He has gone to Elizabeth at a time of “petty despair.” Finally he tells his wife the marriage is over. He has learned that we hardly know where we’re going, and that it may not matter. Perhaps in the riddle of Elizabeth’s life is the key to his own: her story is not morally exemplary, but instructive just as it is.

“Every question,” he says, “seems to boil down to this: how we got in and how we get out.”

Swann’s book is an interesting mixture of chaos and finesse. His Elizabeth is a fascinating focal point—mad, sexy, coy, original—and very much more compelling than the narrator, who seems unusually passive. I wish Swann had stayed closer to his theme, and tightened his structure. *Elizabeth* is an engaging story, but an elusive one.

* * *

All three novellas in Penmaen’s fiction series have in common an intense, compressed prose style, strong in voice. There’s nothing lazy in the writing. All three take enormous risks; they are disquieting and demanding to read. They are enhanced by elegant printing. The novellas are published in editions of 1000 copies; 300 of these are specially bound, numbered and signed by the writer and artist. The special editions sell for $40; the regular hardcover books cost $12.

One might hope that in the future Michael McCurdy and his associates will broaden the range of the fiction series, and bring out fine work that is more accessible. This might help the Press to find the wider audience it deserves. *–Mary Peterson*

FILM

Montage

At this writing half Mr. Reagan’s first year had passed with the attendant dismantling of the liberal/humanitarian social and political underpinnings of U.S. culture. Against which nary a voice, and but a few votes are yet cast, but what happens when it starts to sift down. . . . when *will* it start to sift down? The thing that makes democracy work is an informed electorate. Informed by what? By the complexities investigated in prime time news? *A Mandate for Change*, the man keeps saying! In the last election the total that voted was 84 million, 798 thousand (out of the potential of 175 million, 222 thousand who were eligible—the *informed electorate*). That’s 48.394608% who bothered to go to the polls. To win Mr. Reagan received 43 million, 201 thousand votes, which is 50.9457%. Mr. Reagan’s tenure was accomplished by 24.655% of the voting population. *A mandate for change?*

2. John Sayles

With the idea of making something that he could take around Hollywood as an audition film, he wrote, produced, directed, edited “The Return of the Secaucus 7” for forty thousand dollars—that’s right: $40,000! He’s also the author of two novels: *Pride of the Bimbos* (1975), *Union Dues* (nominated for both National Book Award and National Critics Circle Award); a collection of short stories: *The Anarchists’ Convention;* and several screenplays. Among them, most recently, is “Alligators,” about which *Newsweek* said, “what puts ‘Alligators’ above all the other ‘Jaws’ ripoffs is its snappy sense of humor.”

There’s no answer here to that endlessly interesting fascination of the links between film and writing (one essentially objective, the other subjective), which comes first in the creators of both. It’s the old chicken or egg question. Sayles, on a promotion tour for the film which he started making in 1978, said although he had always wanted to be a writer, so he had always been interested in film.

“I knew that if you didn’t write and direct a film, you’re not the author of it. In fact, the second line on most film contracts—when you sign as writer—it says whatever company ‘will hereafter be known as the author of the screenplay.‘ Even the director very rarely gets to be the author of a film—it’s collaborative. But if you write and direct something, when it comes out of the studio machine—whatever machine the money came from—you are the author of it. You’re story telling and you have total control over it. I’m still interested in screen writing as a collaborative thing. I think one of the nice things about movies, as opposed to fiction writing, is that sometimes you can get more than a hundred percent into something.”

I remember reading and liking Sayles’ story, “I-80 Nebraska M.490-M.205” (which was also an O.Henry Award) some time ago. Subsequent to the pleasure of seeing the picture, I got the recent collection of stories, and a pleasant jolt of recognition in finding all of them a piece. He writes a plain prose, it seems, with nice stylistic turns, the concentration on character. In the *Newsweek* review of the film Jack Kroll said: “Already Sayles’ directing style reflects his writing style in its deceptive ease: you feel as if you’re eavesdropping on real people in real places with real relationships, talking real talk. . . Sayles understands and likes his characters; he captures the melancholy of inexorable normalcy as it overtakes these nice ordinary people who once burned with world-changing zeal.”

Sayles himself would agree that his POV is towards people (another reason he made the film was to show the people in it to other people who would not ordinarily know them), but he would quarrel with the last part, I think. In his view this picture started from an idea of what it was like for people turning 30. So it was made for and with people who were around that age, which meant they were of the age that would have been involved in the radicalism of the counter culture if they were of that inclination—as the people in the script were. Having kept in touch, ten odd years later they decide to have a reunion.

“Another thing I’m getting at,”

Sayles said, "is that my experience with people who were activists in the sixties is not that they've all gone for the bucks and become corporation lawyers, but they're doing whatever they're doing, and they still believe pretty much everything that they believed back then. They're not doing the same things about it; they don't have a mass movement to plug into, but they haven't sold out."

Considering low budget Hollywood to be around $4 million, it's encouraging to know that a picture can be made for what this one cost. Photographed in 16mm negative on a ratio of 10 to 1 in 25 days and nights, it was then blown up to 35mm for theatrical release. Actually the figure was $40 thousand cash, which didn't include another $20 thousand for the distributor to make the blow-up, and some $60 thousand in deferred payments to cast and crew. But still that's marvelous, and it's more marvelous that the picture got a release (to favorable reviews), since in the industry of today that's where the maverick kind often founder.

Exhibited at the Los Angeles festival/market, Filmex, in 1980, a couple of people recommended "Return of the Secaucus 7" to Randy Finley, an exhibitor/distributor (7 Gable Theatres/Specialty Films) in Seattle who has the reputation of being interested in small and/or otherwise odd-ball films. Specialty Films is the same outfit that took on "Stunt Man" when no distributor would touch it. Putting it in one of their theatres (from June 27, 1980 to April 23, 1981) they proved that it had enough legs to be picked up by 20th Century Fox, and go on to a good box-office, critical accolades, vindication, and a nomination for the Academy Awards.

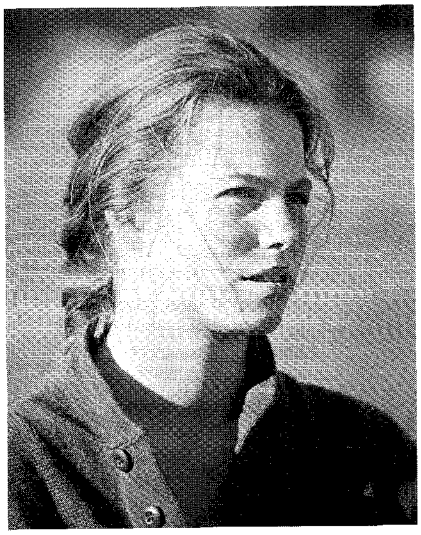
Speaking of his reviews Sayles thoughts were that the form of the film (the low budget, unknown cast, no striking 70mm panavision look—although the look for me was certainly not to be sneered at; it was plain and good, not an obvious blow-up at all) did not effect the critics' aesthetic appreciation of the film. But it did make the film *special*, so they could give it space. "It's gotten in magazines and where it ordinarily wouldn't, because the budget makes it a *story!* They can talk their editors into letting them write something about a movie that's not going to be playing everywhere."

In these days of super-serialized characters, caricatures all, in the epic sequels, the melodramas that cost between $15 and $20 million, what is one to think about such a sensible man as John Sayles? But to wish him good luck.

3. *ars longa, vita brevis est*

This past year my daughter, the aspiring actress, was cast in a nationally released Public Service tv commercial about abused children. The scene, a high school playing field, a game of soccer being played, the group along the sidelines is cheering it on. The girl crosses into the frame, greeting a boy. Cut to: 2-Shot, the girl asking why he's not playing? Shame-faced he passes off his limping to an accident at home. Cut to: CU the girl, and she's on the case—seriously, touching his shoulder, asking is it his father again? Cut to: CU the boy. He nods. So it continues in alternate close-ups. She's imploring him to report it, to a teacher—to someone. It's an earnest appeal to the world in *front* of the television screen, in which parents torture and beat their own children.

I watch my daughter work, thinking how an actor's real world is sometimes the character he or she plays. They may be slightly misfit in the *so-called* real world the rest of us see (so perhaps it's not so dumb!). I remember how there's a kind of click in the good ones when they go into the performance; the focus in the eyes shifts. I am prejudiced of course, but I saw it click in my daughter. She was good, as was the boy she played against, who's also a member of Ensemble Theatre Company, the same group my daughter's been with for four years. And as the years have passed I have seen her in a lot of plays, too; I've watched her become more and more adept with the craft.



The first time I recognized that she was suddenly not my daughter, but a character in a play, it amazed me. The revelation was a kind of click itself. And so the past four years have been a time she has passed through and changed within, and it seems now it passed almost unremarked—and so quickly! Ritual occasions, weddings, wakes, graduations, that's when these insights come, to be aware and overwhelmed by its having happened, and there's both joy and pain in the *denouement.*

The public service announcement was shot this past year, one of 6 to 8 such that the local KPIX (Westinghouse) produces, a policy the company has pursued for some years. Done in conjunction with the Family Service Agency, they are used in the 5 stations that compose the Westinghouse network, and the point of view to making them is to reach kids, using kids in them. On the air it was smooth. It only looked to my too-picky eyes like it had been shot in two hours with the bare minimum of hardware to get the images on the 3/4 inch video tape. That's to be expected given the spare budgets these things are produced for, but then, how many people notice that? It used to be said that it was just in the screening room looking at dailies where all the flaws were seen—noticed, a bunch of professionals picking at each other's work. In the theatres who was going to notice?

One hopes the message in this commercial will be marked, for it's a terrible thing, this battering of children by their parents. Thinking about it now, foreseeing the short time into the future when one part of the role of parent, that of nurturing and teaching a child (flawed now and again as it had to be) is going to change. It's coming to an end. In the fall my daughter will be 18, and technically emancipated from me; soon the nurturing and teaching will be to the woman she's become already in many ways.

In June she graduated from High School, but it was just yesterday I wrote about her graduation from Middle School (NAR, Fall, '77). "June in 1977 is a month of graduations and prophesies," I wrote. "From the east portico winds. . . a column of eighth graders. . . " In that piece I talked of the erosion of that school's grand dream: "planned and built in those days when *relevance* (as opposed to regimentation) was the cry. . . the options were unlimited, the emphasis was on the individual and self-realization." Back then I noted that the school, new in 1970, had been touted for its 4 modulated sub-schools, its moving walls, and doorless classrooms—but even then, in 1977, it was obsolete. "Rising costs and fewer students have caught it in a terrible bind; next year fewer elective and enrichment classes will be offered; they're closing up part of the school." That was then and now, this year, Middle school, a hulk of its potential, came near to being closed altogether. Things are not getting better in public education, they're getting worse.

Long dresses—white, pink, pale blue—floppy broad brimmed hats that had to be held against the dry wind, that's what the girls were wearing 4 years ago, the high heels clumping on uncertain feet. "With the boys, suits, a tuxedo here or there. . . On many the pants are too short, and thin ankles and big shoes hang out. . . " Now, suddenly, the years have passed and everything and nothing has changed.

The seniors enter the open Greek amphitheatre style theatre behind Tamalpais High School, above them the sky cloudy from our endemic summer fog. On the stage the school orchestra is arranged in front of a bright wall mural, an abstract classroom set in a greensward done in strong greens and browns. At each corner of the center section reserved for the about-to-be-graduates a flower girl in white holds aloft the flower arch.

Both side sections are filled with proud parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, grandfathers, and underclass friends; the blacks sit all together at the top. Everybody is happy. Suffering from budget cuts and low morale, with a history of racial friction, this is a variegated sometimes tumultuous school, the student body formed into cliques. But tonight I feel it strongly in the air: the graduates are all together, sharing the cosmic joke that *this is graduation day* and they made it through. Cheering and shouting as the long list of names is read, enthusiastically, tonight, they seem to look ahead. They're aware of the irony that the folder which they will be given with a hand shake from the principal is empty. You see, this evening's the last time this school will have control over them, and the hostage the school holds against some uprising, some loss of control (beer drinking and carousing like last year), is the diploma they could withhold from such a perpetrator/culprit.

This year they are all in caps and gowns—white for the girls and blue for the boys—and if they had trouble with holding their hats against the wind at Middle School, this evening it's the mortarboards with dangling tassel slipping awry. But beneath the hems of the gowns these graduates wear there is many a well-turned ankle and spike-heeled shoe and they come sure-footed down the steps and up to the podium and go on into the future. May few of them stumble on the steeper steps to come.

4. Ashland Redux

In these uncertain days of the movie business (as well as the world), more and more, you hear moguls and czars talking about what's going to happen when the country is fastened into the pay-tv cables, not only to the local movie house and the whole production/distribution structure that feeds it, but also free-tv (the networks)? What the future holds, you remember, is the *Media Room;* wall screen with high resolution pictures, a VDT to write into and get information out of (with access to encyclopedias and libraries and news and financial reports, call-order catalogues and electronic mail capability), comfortable chairs, a thick carpet—the mind boggles at everything that room is going to do for us. We won't even have *to go out of the house* (this is 1981, there's 3 to go to 1984). And the mind boggles at that thought, too.

In 1968 I spent some time at a community in Oracle, Arizona. Among the varied and fascinating group that lived on what had been the *hot* dude ranch in the '30s was Arthur, who was taking a masters at the University of Arizona. I don't remember exactly what his field of study was—something to do with agriculture and economics, I think. But I remember him talking about the future, and how the most valuable use of land would be for recreation. Forget agriculture and cattle and all of that, no matter how many millions they brought in, and how necessary they were to a continually growing world population. That land would have to compete with land that brought in much more—because in the future it was going to be absolutely vital for people to get away—to relax and renew what was burned out.

JAMES FRAZEE

BOCCACCIO'S GARDEN

I'm pale from tilling soil
where the rain collects
into puddles that spell your name.

Leave it to you I drool
a gardener's saliva,
the mouthful of sawdust

anointing bougainvillea.
Is this what you've left me?
Over the headstone

I follow a snail's odor
sullen and gliding
to you below,

like an abandoned white scaffold
lighting the tomb.
Giovanni, if I banged

with this rusted hoe
I would hear the sigh of rain,
or flesh adjusting

over my bones
that I don't think of as bones
since I am alive.

Arthur was right and although we didn't know about the Media Room back then, it seems to me that there's got to be something more, no matter how high the level of art/entertainment appearing in minute detail on our wall-sized screens. Feeling the walls closing in myself, in the late spring, we took off to Ashland, Oregon and its Shakespearean Festival. It is such a place, where the value of the land the institution is built on is infinite.

There's a ski mountain just south of Ashland where the festival opens the end of February, so you could combine the two on a late winter trip; I wonder do they go together? The downhill slope and The Bowmer Theatre? No matter now, the clouds have lifted and broken enough for the sun to come through. Ahead on the left, on the left hand side of the valley, looking over the broken green "western looking" slopes to the east, is Ashland—we've been there before (NAR, Winter 1977). It was in fact, that year my daughter graduated from Middle School.

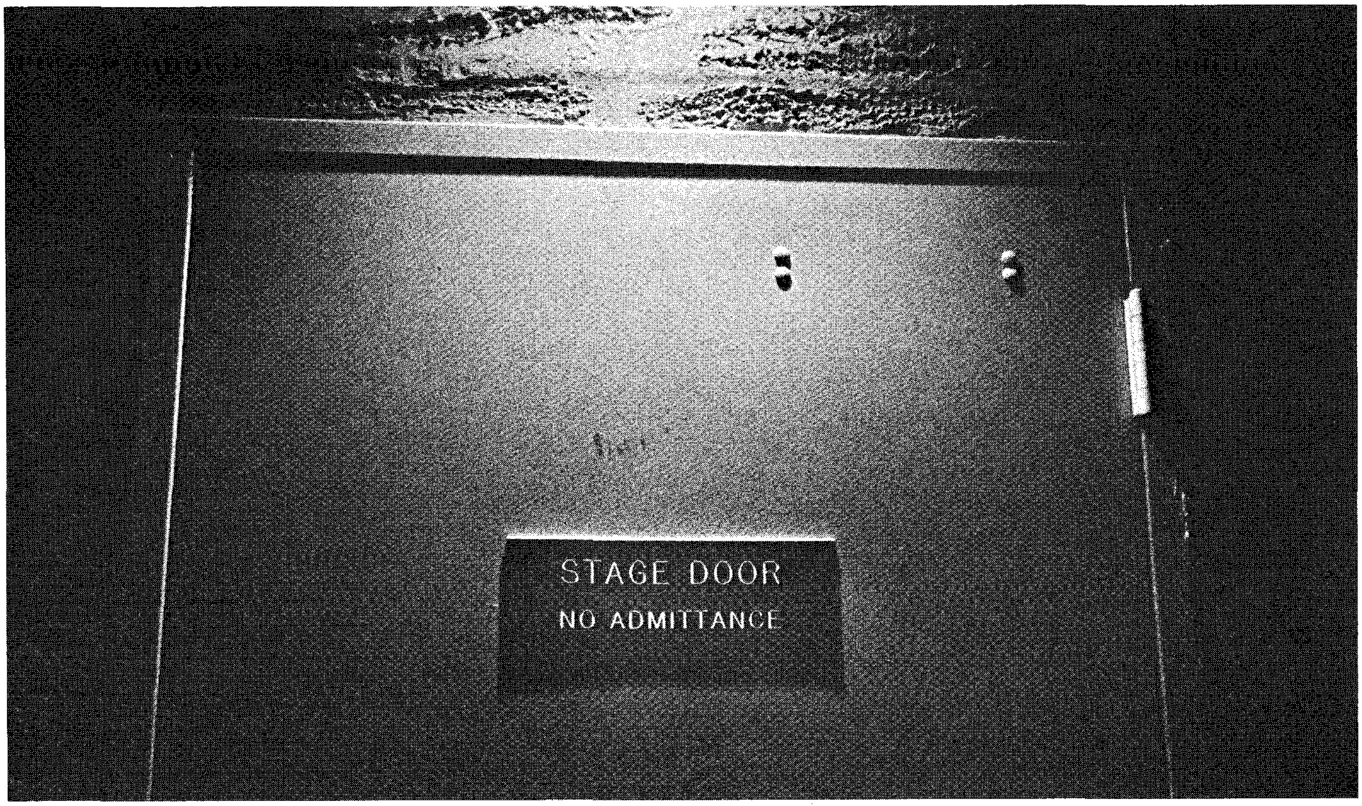
The festival estimates that 91% of its audience live outside a 100-mile radius of Ashland, that (based on mailing list and ticket orders) 44% come from Oregon, 40% from California, 13% from Washington, leaving 3% for the rest of the world. Total attendance in 1980 was 264,496, 88.1% of capacity, for 579 performances of 12 plays, down a little from the year before when they had 90.5% of capacity for fewer performances and 500 more attendees. But last year was a bad year for gasoline and it's apparently true that more people are staying closer to home. That's what's said, and on the other hand this summer is a banner one, and everybody is on the road. They should go to Ashland; truly it is a regional theatre, and more important for that in a day when the tendency appears to be to bigger and bigger, more and more centralized.

> *The theatre owes its artistic life to its singular ability to project uniquely human values to a large and diverse contemporary community. For the performing arts there is no ivory tower. The market place is the natural forum for musicians, poets, actors, jugglers, dancers and clowns. To survive they must please, astonish, tickle into laughter or move into tears a fickle and skeptical mass, collectively unconscious of its own emotions. Their mission is to show most vividly what it's like in this time, in this place, to be a human being. Their call is to reveal the face of man to mankind.*

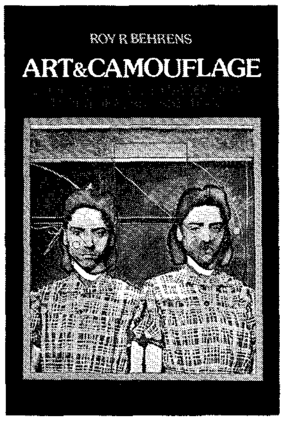
So writes Jerry Turner, the festival's artistic director, speaking about what theatre is and does and needs, and against the proposed cut-back in federal funding "because it signals an attitude towards the arts all too familiar in a country of puritan traditions." Did I read recently that among the nations that comprise Western Civilization the United States spends the least on art? As with other like institutions the festival has long term money problems, the gap between income and outgo. Inflation and rising costs play havoc with a labor intensive organization, and the current gap hovered around 20% early this year. To counteract this, with the theme: "The Next 50 Years," a 5 year $10 million Endowment Fund Campaign has been set up.

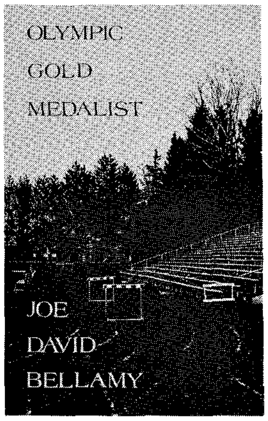
On this too hurried visit one play we saw was "Wild Oats", written by John O'Keeffe who was born in 1747. An 18th Century comedy/farce, first performed in 1791, that its plot is so convoluted as to be on the edge of obscure doesn't matter a bit. What remains is the memory of sharing belly laughter with an audience, and the admiration for the performance of the main character, an actor, called Jack Rover. Played with a swashbuckling verve by the actor Denis Arndt, in the big space of that theatre the infectious spirit of the character, the performance he creates became tangible to me. The very ether of the auditorium is made light by this play.

As the opposite was true of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" played on the same stage. The brooding tragedy, focused in the cut-away house center stage, surrounded by towering buildings and the dark, house and family both sunk by the impact of the future, the seductive lies of illusion, and the terminal—often sad—nature of man. Given the complex and absolutely real dynamic of interaction between the salesman/father and his two sons and the wife (who loves him and at the end still doesn't understand), there is another level resonating, too. Miller's play, produced in 1949, when the first impact of the post-war boom was rocking the ship of state, spins a motif for a future, a metaphor for what America had become then, and was to become more: the culture of commerce with the goal of maximum profit. Power is money: The American Dream, that floated there in the atmosphere of the auditorium. And these resonances from both plays, different as night to day, are what theatre (and film experienced with an audience) is and the media room can never be. —*Lawrence Sturhahn*



BOOKS FROM THE NAR


ROY R BEHRENS
ART&CAMOUFLAGE


OLYMPIC
GOLD
MEDALIST
JOE
DAVID
BELLAMY

THE HEART
NEVER FITS
ITS WANTING
stories by
Lee K. Abbott, Jr.

RICHARD RACKSTRAW
LEARNING
TO SPEAK

Art and Camouflage, by Roy R. Behrens: $10.95

A succinct and lucid account of the coinciding developments of military and natural camouflage studies, Gestalt psychology, Dada, Surrealism, and the Bauhaus. Preface by Guy Davenport. Illustrated. 8½ × 11 format, 91p.

Olympic Gold Medalist, by Joe David Bellamy: $6.95

A new collection, printed on fine papers and sent shrink-wrapped and post-paid. "Mesmerizing descriptions of reality . . . "—*Diane Wakoski* "Stunningly explosive . . ."—*Michael Benedikt.* 64p.

The Heart Never Fits Its Wanting: $9.95 $5.95 (paper) by Lee K. Abbott, Jr.:

Ten stories of the joy, awe, and mayhem which mark the connections between men and women. Written by a new author of comic insight. "Rowdy and yet tender, funny yet serious on the highest plane."—*Mary Oliver.* 119p. *1981 St. Lawrence Award for Fiction.*

Learning to Speak, by Richard Rackstraw: $3.95

A posthumous collection. The book's premise—that we must learn the disturbing complexities of the world before we can presume to express ourselves—may have kept the poet from a timelier sharing of his talents. Cover by James Buckels. 48p.

The North American Review, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

Please send me:

☐ ________ copies of The Heart Never Fits Its Wanting ☐ hardcover @ $9.95 ☐ paperback @ $5.95
☐ ________ copies of Olympic Gold Medalist @ $6.95
☐ ________ copies of Learning to Speak @ $3.95
☐ ________ copies of Art & Camouflage @ $10.95

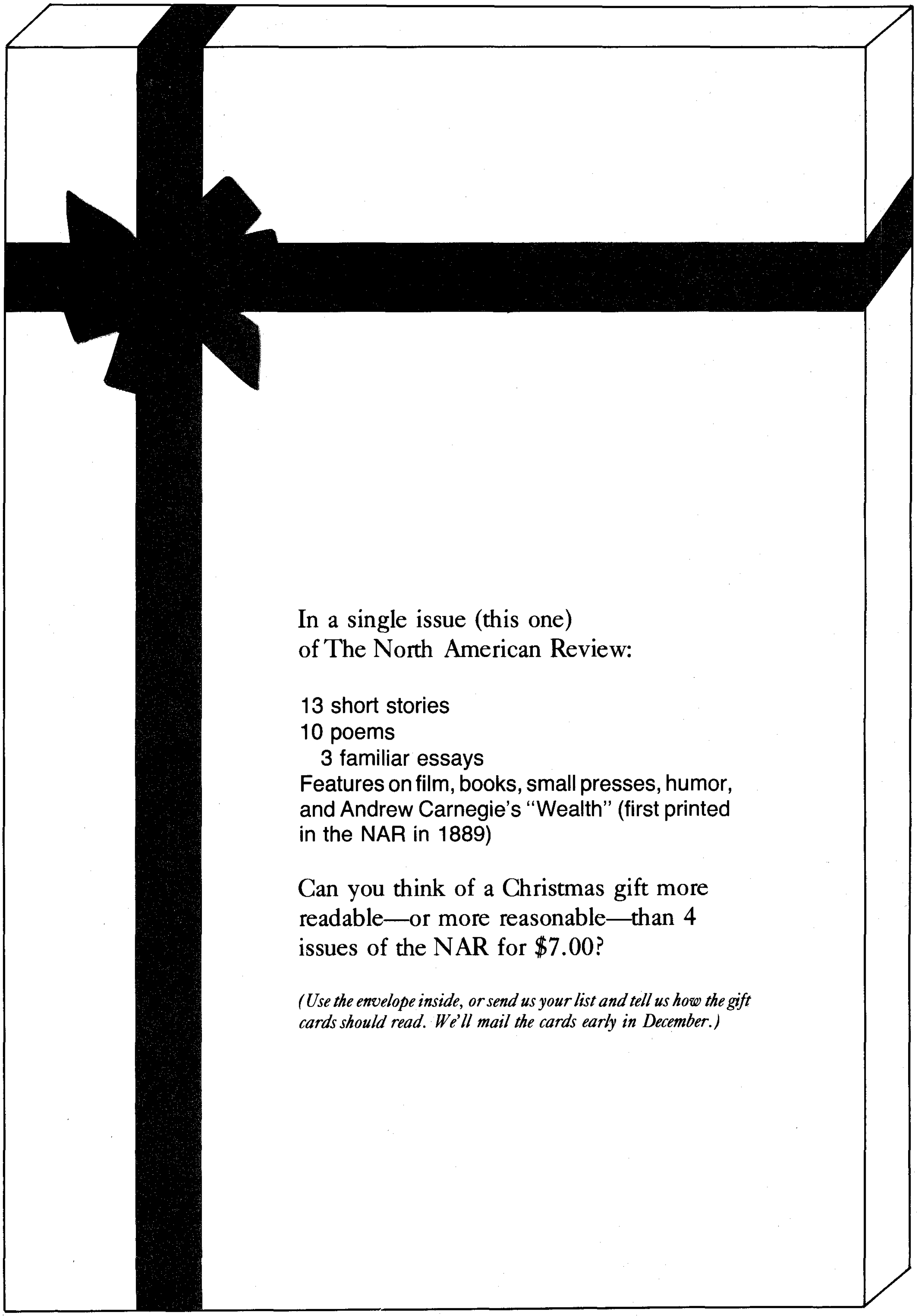
I enclose $__________ or charge my MasterCard account # ______________________________

Name ______________________________ Interbank # ______________ Expires ______/______

Address ______________________________ Authorized signature: ______________________________

City & State
or Province ______________________________ (Zip/Postal Code)

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



In a single issue (this one)
of The North American Review:

13 short stories
10 poems
3 familiar essays
Features on film, books, small presses, humor, and Andrew Carnegie's "Wealth" (first printed in the NAR in 1889)

Can you think of a Christmas gift more readable—or more reasonable—than 4 issues of the NAR for $7.00?

(Use the envelope inside, or send us your list and tell us how the gift cards should read. We'll mail the cards early in December.)